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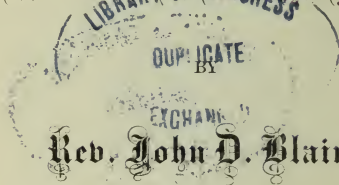
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THE
DOMESTIC CIRCLE;

OR,

MORAL AND SOCIAL DUTIES

EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED

ON SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES,

IN

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES.

BY THE REV. M. SORIN.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY J. HARMSTEAD,
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PREFACE.

THE subjects embraced in this little volume, are decidedly practical. They are not questions of speculation and amusement, but of duty; of solemn obligation to God and man. It is, therefore, highly probable, that they will afford but few characters of interest to such as devote their reading chiefly to what is amusing, ludicrous, or strange. Persons of this class generally find their only intellectual enjoyment in the regions of fiction, and appreciate an author only as he ministers to their morbid appetite. The gratification of any predilection of this nature would have been incompatible with the duties of the ministerial character, as well as irrelevant to the important object, at present, in view.

The practice of inculcating the doctrines of the Cross, and the weightier matters of the law, in a style adapted to the vitiated taste and spirit

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of the times, is, at best, a desecration of the truth, which is thus enfeebled and corrupted by the medium through which it is communicated; and is, therefore, deeply to be deplored, and calls for a spirited and fearless resistance. It is a dishonorable surrender of that high character for efficiency claimed by the religion of Christ, and which stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. "He that hath a dream, let him tell a dream," but says the Prophet, "he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully:" for, "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord."

In presenting this volume to the reader, it may be expedient to inform him, that it was not originally intended for public inspection; but was composed chiefly to methodise the writer's own views on the several topics embraced in the series. To him, these all appear to be vitally interesting questions, whether viewed in their relation to the pure morality of the Gospel, or in their bearings on the order and happiness of civil society.

Doubtless, some will wish that one more able and better qualified, had taken this subject in

hand, and given to the church and world, a plain, forcible, and manly illustration of the nature, limits, and responsibilities of the “Domestic Circle;” one specially adapted to the principles and habits of society in *this country*. In the expressions of such a wish, the writer of this volume does most heartily concur. And but for the fear arising out of this reflection, that by publishing, he would offend against the generation of his people, this volume had been before the public at an earlier date. “I said, I am young and ye are very old, wherefore I was afraid and durst not show you mine opinion. I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.” Indeed, the idea of publishing would never have been seriously entertained by the writer, but for the acknowledged necessity of something in this form, and the opinion of brethren and friends, in whose judgment he could confide, that these Discourses were adapted to that necessity.

M. S.

PHILADELPHIA, *Feb.* 10, 1840.

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THE DOMESTIC CIRCLE.

DISCOURSE I.

NATURE AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE MARRIAGE COMPACT.

Matt. xix, 4. 6. "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female ; And said, for this cause shall a man leave Father and Mother, and shall cleave to his wife ; and they twain shall be one flesh ? wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

THE text presents as the objects of our present inquiry, the *nature* and *duties* of the marriage compact. A subject in which all are profoundly interested ; and than which few can present stronger claims on our attention, and yet it is one that but few persons consider attentively, and with that deliberation and thoughtfulness which is proportioned to its immense importance. This is a fact the more to be regretted, because of the consequences that it involves, and also

Preliminary remarks.

because it is a principle manifestly established beyond all controversy, that every institution of God, designed to regulate the moral principles, habits, and associations of men, is properly a subject of human investigation, and that all such appointments rise and strengthen in their claims on our attention in precisely the same ratio that they involve the interests of man, either individually or in the aggregate.

We are aware, that in the investigation of these very delicate but vitally interesting questions, we are not at liberty to enter into as free and full an elucidation of rights, obligations, and immunities, as in the discussion of some other institutions of religion, or questions of evangelical morality. We hope, however, so to guard our exposition of this subject, that while we place it in a clear, strong, and Scriptural light, we shall not offer violence to the feelings of any, not excepting even the most fastidious, and shall turn the attention to certain aspects and bearings of the institution not sufficiently embraced and deliberated upon in the calculations of all, who assume the truly solemn and adventurous responsibilities of the marriage union.

I. The first point to which we solicit your attention, is the *Nature of the Institution*.

Marriage is defined to be a civil and religious

Marriage a civil and religious contract.

contract. (See Watson's Institute, vol. iii, p. 286—289.) We adopt this definition of the subject, in preference to any that we have seen, as the one most conformable to Scripture and reason; and further, because it does not degrade the institution into a mere civil contract—a cold business transaction; nor does it involve the absurdity of classing among the *sacraments* of the Christian church, an appointment of God having its origin in the primeval condition of man, and by no means a distinctive character of the Christian religion, but manifestly designed for, and accessible to all men, whether pious or profane.

Directing our course, therefore, between these two extremes, the first of which, in our opinion, tends to infidelity, and, by destroying the sacredness of the institution, lessens the force of its obligations; while the other as naturally inclines to fanaticism, and, like all other principles of its class, is seldom found alone, but generally in union with some greater eccentricities of thought, if not enormities of action. The lively oracles of God are the only infallible authority, and unerring guide, in all questions of this complexion. To these let us bow with the deepest reverence; “thus saith the Lord,” is, or ought to be, an end of all controversy. Here the case is made perfectly plain, that whatever there may be of the nature

Scriptures paramount authority. Six propositions.

of a civil contract in the marriage union, and whatever human legislators or civil magistrates may have to do in regulating its forms and circumstances, the institution itself originated with God, and He alone can dissolve its obligations.

These points are most clearly set forth in the text. "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh? wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The text, as you perceive, suggests the following propositions: 1. The parties are originally the same in the author and excellency of their nature. 2. They were designed for this union, as one conducive to the glory of God, and the increase of their mutual happiness. 3. That to the formation of this union, every other earthly relation should be held subordinate. 4. That being once united, they are no more twain, but one flesh. 5. That no power under heaven can dissolve the obligations of this contract, but on one account, distinctly specified in the Word of God; and 6. That any dissolution of the marriage compact, whether by the church or the state, save for that one cause to which we

Reasons. Abuse of legislative power. Wesley.

have already referred, is a sin highly offensive to God, and pernicious in its influence on society. To enlarge on these particulars severally is not our design; we merely state them for the purpose of fixing attention, and throwing your minds on such a course of thought, as we deem appropriate to the subject; and not that we have the vanity even to hope, that we can arrest that licentious exercise of legislative power, which pollutes the annals of our country with the record of divorcements pettishly asked for and inconsiderately given; or for comparatively trivial considerations; as if men, who are empowered to make civil regulations for themselves, could also abrogate the moral institutions of their Maker. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder;" these views are fully sustained by our Divine Redeemer, Matt. v, 32. "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." On this passage of Scripture, Mr. Wesley holds the following pointed language: "All polygamy is clearly forbidden in these words, wherein our Lord expressly declares, that for any woman who has a husband

The marriage compact of divine appointment.

alive, to marry again is adultery. By parity of reason it is adultery for any man to marry again so long as he has a wife alive. Yea although they were divorced, unless that divorce had been for the cause of adultery. In that only case there is no Scripture which forbids the innocent person to marry again.”—*3d Discourse on the Sermon on the Mount.*—*See also Rom. vii, 2, 3.*

As there is no institution existing among men more obviously of Divine appointment than the institution of marriage, so nothing is more clearly intimated in the circumstances of its origin, and the various expressions of the will of God we have received concerning its nature, than that it was to be limited to two persons; and that it was to be most inviolably kept in its obligations by both the parties.

The marriage compact, as a Divine appointment, is one according to *reason*—one proper to man, viewed in the light of a thinking or sentient being, and is designed to advance great and important ends, worthy of the author of his existence and his own immortal destiny, as a creature of thought and moral responsibility. But still it is strictly true, that there is much of feeling and human sympathy in the association. And it is necessary that there should be, for these are the very sweeteners of life, and cement of society; but is

As such, it is according to reason.

it therefore less an institution of reason, because it calls into exercise the tenderer sympathies of the heart, to maintain the authority of the understanding, and engages both our intellectual and animal nature, to harmonise in sustaining its various cares and complicated responsibilities? Most certainly not: for, by the manifest appointment of heaven, reason is the only safe and sufficient guard of feeling. It is not more evidently the province of mind to preside over matter, than it is of reason to hold the reins and direct the course of passion, and to regulate the degrees of their fervor, and the frequency of their pulsations; and thus to maintain a healthy equilibrium between the frigidity of a mere philosophical speculation, and the extravagant dreams of visionary and romantic lovers. Reason is designed to guard against an unhealthy stagnation of feeling, in which the sympathies become morally putrid, and send their poisonous exhalations in deadening stupor through the soul; and, on the other hand, to prevent a childish and doting fondness, which not unfrequently implies a want of correct and well digested principle, and is always indicative of great imbecility of mind. It is her province to maintain a free, gentle and strengthening circulation of the tenderest feelings, the purest sympathies and noblest

The first marriage.

principles of the human heart; and thus to exemplify, with all the emphasis of a practical demonstration, that the parties are no more twain but one flesh.

In the formation of the first matrimonial compact, there can be no doubt but that all the parties concerned—God who solemnised the nuptials, and our first parents who then became one flesh, on their wedding day—were all actuated by principles of the highest and purest reason. The parties were provided for each other with infinite skill, and were given to each other in purest benevolence—for they were perfect. No storm of unholy passion agitated or tossed the bosom—no sense of guilt or shame confused the understanding—no forms of evil tempers lay smothered in the soul to rise and mar their future peace, or break their tender union. Then human nature breathed in all the freshness of youth and smiled in all the loveliness of innocence, free from all guile and deceit within, it apprehended none from abroad. Universal nature rejoiced in their new made and far spreading enjoyments, and reflected, as from a thousand mirrors, the benevolence of their Creator in all that his power had made. Thus our first parents were cemented together in the most tender and sacred union, for ends nearly allied to those of the original

A further office of reason.

creation, under the sanction and safeguard of reason, the solemnities of religion, and the overshadowing benediction of heaven.

In still further illustration of this view of our subject, we may remark that reason not only approves the marriage union, as right and proper to man, but is also a necessary element in its construction. Reason must judge of the suitability of the parties—its solemn and lasting responsibilities—the duties as well as the difficulties of the married life—the manner of performing the one and of enduring the other—how a family are to be provided for—children are to be governed, and many other questions of similar import are to be discussed by reason, as directed by the precepts of Revelation; and until an intelligent and satisfactory answer can be given to these interrogatories, whatever may be the fervor of affection or the strength of attachment, reason disapproves the union as a rash and hazardous experiment. But we are,

2dly. To regard this also as an institution of religion. If it is not recognised as such in all systems of moral philosophy, it is because some are false and others are defective. For we are certain that in the only true system of theology, and perfect code of moral rules—the Scriptures of truth—marriage is distinctly appointed as a

Marriage an institution of religion.

part of that economy under which man is placed as a religious being—and it is a subject on which our Allwise Creator has had special legislative action, as the moral governor of the world, and respecting which he has given sundry highly important precepts to man;—precepts so blended and identified with the religion of Christ, as to be thereby constituted a prominent part of the system. And, therefore, although it is not required of all persons to enter into this relation, all who do enter into it are bound, under pain of divine displeasure, to keep their plighted vows of fidelity and affection, with a tenacity uncompromising as the love of life, and sincere and sacred as the incense of devotion.

Before we conclude or dismiss this view of our subject, it may be interesting to advert to the fact, that marriage was not introduced after man became a sinner, and fell under the withering curse of his Maker, for the purpose of ameliorating his condition, as an unhappy fugitive on the earth. No, but it is one of those special blessings of our primeval state, which has survived the wreck of Eden, and our terrestrial Paradise. It was appointed to man while he stood out before the world, glowing in all the moral grandeur of his Maker's image, as prince and priest of this earthly realm. It was given for the pur-

Both according to reason and religion.

pose of finishing his character;—fixing his affections, and perfecting his earthly felicity. And is it not then perfectly clear, that both reason and religion approve the institution, as one in every way congenial with the highest state of moral purity, of which our nature is capable, and as highly conducive to its preservation and improvement; and hence it is not without reason, that they are said to give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils who forbid it to any, seeing God appointed it for all—(See 1 Tim. iv, 1—3.)—with the exception of certain specified cases—(See Matt. xix, 11, 12)—not important to be named.

As an institution, both according to reason and religion, as subservient to the interests of moral virtue and civil order, the marriage compact is taken under the cognizance and protection of the civil government; and this for the best of reasons, as every one may see who will consult writers on the subject of moral and political philosophy. But it is not our design to pursue the subject in that direction, but to confine ourselves as much as possible to its practical bearings. For it is not so much the theory of the institution, as its connection with the ordinary occurrences of life, in the understanding of which men generally are

Pre-requisites in marriage.

interested; and that we wish to offer as the principal subject of our present consideration.

Another important view of this subject, embraces those estimates of fitness and expediency that ought never to be overlooked in the formation of matrimonial connections; and which are necessary to give sanctity and strength to its associations. In illustration of this point, we may remark, that as in architecture, the stability of an edifice depends very much upon the nature of the materials, as well as on the manner in which they are put together; both in laying the foundation, and carrying up the superstructure. So also in the marriage union, a vast deal depends on the suitability of the parties, their adaptation to each other. A marriage compact, formed by persons having no proper congeniality or resemblance in age, disposition, education, or religion, is, at best, an unsightly association, and is not very unlike a certain image partly of clay and partly of iron, a combination held by force of law, or pecuniary interest, but naturally inclining to separation, with all the force of constitutional impulse. To render this union permanent and prosperous, there ought to be

1. A resemblance of age. This is most dis-

Resemblance in age.

tinctly intimated in the origin of the institution. It is true that God first made man, thereby giving him the pre-eminence in age as well as in place, but still the difference in this particular between our first parents was so very slight as scarcely to destroy its identity. From the origin of the institution, therefore, as well as its nature it is perfectly manifest that the parties should have a *resemblance in age*. They are not to come, as is sometimes the case, from the opposite extremes of life, chilled with the frost of age, and decrepid with years on the one hand, and glowing with fire and buoyant with the animation of youth on the other.

How to account for the formation of the class of marriages here referred to, is exceedingly difficult, on any principles honorable to human nature. For most certainly unperturbed by a false education, vicious counsellors, or wicked passions, the human mind has no such partialities. And the thing itself is in such manifest opposition to all analogy, to all the suggestions of reason, and tender breathings of passion, that the existence of the elements of some sordid meanness or secret villany, must be suspected in these arrangements. And even where this is not the case, the inexpediency of the thing is matter of common consent; and its impropriety subject of

Congeniality of disposition.

general censure. Whatever, therefore, may be the active principle in the promotion of such alliances, there is no power in nature that can give them the attribute of a pure and lasting fellowship.

“As well might heavenly concerts spring
From two old lutes with ne’er a string,
Or none beside the bass.”

The entrance of the race and the goal, are not more naturally irreconcilable extremes, than comparative youth and old age; nor do the cradle and the coffin form a more unnatural and repulsive association, than hoary age and blooming youth, in matrimonial union. We instinctively turn from the sight, as violent and unnatural, unprovided for in the economy of nature, and humiliating and afflictive to all that is generous or noble in the sympathies of our species. Hence there should be a resemblance in age.

2. There should also be a *congeniality in disposition*, for whatever natural predilections there may be in the human mind for symmetry of form and gracefulness of person, the foundations of conjugal felicity are not laid in these alone, for it is a fact that has not escaped the attention of the observing, that some of the most delicately formed, and beautifully decorated portions of the irrational creation, have the most

Appearances not to be relied on.

venomous, untractable, and malignant nature; hearts that cannot feel, and spirits formed for cruelty; and, most unfortunately for our race, there is not wanting a suitable analogy to these in the human species. We speak not of either sex exclusively, but of the general analogy as a fact not to be disputed, and most certainly designed by our Great Creator for our admonition; that persons should not follow implicitly the sight of their eyes on this momentous subject, but subjecting the testimony of the senses to the scrutiny of reason, act worthy of their rational existence.

As we are not to rely on the adornments of nature, so neither are we to trust to those of art, the decorations of dress, and artful platting of the hair; the exhibition of jewelry and precious stones afford but a flimsy basis for domestic happiness. These may answer the purpose of display; may gratify the ambition of family pride; may serve to sparkle and blaze in the circles of fashion and show, but very frequently they are not unlike those gilded clouds, that skirt and fringe the thunder storm, and indicate by their ingenious and gaudy foldings, the fierceness of the tempest that they adorn.

To afford efficient aid in enduring the various ills, and in performing the duties of domestic life, there must be, reciprocally, meekness and gen-

No valued substitute for sameness of spirit.

tleness of spirit, amiability of disposition, congeniality of soul ; for which neither sparkling wit, finished beauty, wealth, nor family distinction can be a solid substitute. There must be the basis of an original resemblance between the parties, in their habits of thought and feeling, as well as of temperament, or there never can be that indefinably tender and permanent union, implied in the declaration that they are one flesh. But if these elements of character are found in suitable proportions in both the parties, then like bodies under the same principle of attraction, they will naturally move towards one common centre ; whereas if in the natural construction of their minds, this property is wanting, they will as naturally incline to opposite directions, impelled by the distinctive principles of their nature, their happiness will be in separation, and not in union. When they meet, it will not be the meeting of congenial and harmonious spirits, but rather like a compound of substances, naturally at variance, that only meet for mutual decomposition or combustion. Hence there should be congeniality of disposition,

“ Not minds of melancholy strain,
Still silent, or that still complain,
Can the dear bondage bless ;
Nor can the soft enchantment hold

Resemblance of education.

Two jarring souls of angry mould,
The rugged and the keen :
Sampson's young foxes might as well
In bonds of cheerful wedlock dwell,
With fire brands tied between ;
Nor let the cruel fetters bind
A gentle to a savage mind ;
For love abhors the sight.
Loose the fierce tiger from the deer,
For native rage and native fear,
Rise and forbid delight."

WATTS.

3. *Resemblance of education.* We speak not of education merely as it is purchased in the schools, or as it is more tenderly and freely imparted by parental affection, at the family hearth. Nor do we confine our views exclusively to the development of mind, and forms of mental discipline. The importance of the subject, however, viewed even in this restricted sense, must be evident to all ; whatever may be the method by which it is obtained, or the period through which it is extended ; because, that while the process of mental enlargement and refinement is going forward, the character is gradually forming to a more excellent model, and to a more elevated and powerful bearing. But by education, at present, we mean that training by which persons have been designed and prepared for the active scenes and rugged realities of the present

Persons differently educated.

life. It may, indeed, comprehend the development of the mind, the illumination of the moral sense, the subjugation of the passions to reason, the formation of the manners, together with a knowledge of those domestic duties, and especially rules of business appropriate to man in all the various conditions of life. The importance of this consideration will readily appear, if we call to mind, that in some classes of society, persons are as rigidly educated to indolence, as in others they are to industry; that some are from infancy trained up to prodigality and display, while others are more wisely taught habits of frugality and good management. That a union of persons thus differently educated should be attended with embarrassment and confusion, in passing through life, is not more surprising than that night should succeed to day, or that any effect should follow its legitimate cause.

We do not say that in all these respects, both the parties must be equally educated, for even where this is not the case, there may be a general resemblance in their habits of mind, their literary taste, their partialities and repugnances; and there may be that peculiar adaptation in the one to neutralize or regulate what is exceptionable or inconvenient in the other. And there may be those little developments of temper,

Resemblance of opinion.

sympathy, and social habits, which show most clearly, that though they have not been cast in precisely the same mould, they are of the same material, and have a natural convergency to the same ultimate formation of character.

And in this event, there is, perhaps, as fair and rational a prospect of permanent, and even increasing felicity in the domestic circle, or more so than where the actual amount of cultivation has been equal in minds differently constituted. For it is not so much what is forced upon the mind by art, as what abounds in it by nature, that gives the broad and ample basis for a true and lasting union.

4. *Resemblance of principle.* With some qualification, it may be said that sameness of sentiment gives sameness of soul; and *vice versa*, and hence unanimity of feeling cannot be reasonably expected in the family circle, where there is a prevailing dissimilarity of opinion—where the practical doctrines of the wife and husband are at variance. This is true in every thing pertaining to the domestic government. But we speak now more specially with reference to religious principles, and insist that there ought to be as perfect a harmony of sentiment on this subject as it is possible to secure. This is not only necessary to comfort, but also to safety, to the

Religious opinion.

Special reasons.

maintenance of a conscience void of offence towards God and man. If persons are to consult their political opinions, their intellectual habits, their pecuniary interests, in the formation of the marriage union, is it to be supposed that they can with impunity, be inattentive to those principles which give moral character to man, that form the basis of his well being here, and of his destiny hereafter? The prominence which was given to the rule of conduct here laid down in the Old Testament, is well understood; and it is unquestionably certain, that it is still a part of the moral code of the New. (See 2 Cor. vi, 14—16.) “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

Therefore secure a partner whose views of Christian doctrine and of the institutions of religion, accord with your own. So that whatever angry strife may agitate the church in her general capacity, you may have peace within your own borders. Bear in mind that it is a most unlovely sight, at best, to see either of the wedded pair endeavoring to tease, persuade, or provoke the other into a reception of their own particular

Resemblance of condition in life.

creed. Yet scenes of this nature do occur, and in some instances, assume all the odiousness of bitter persecution; but what else can be expected where persons marry in violation of the Scripture above quoted? Here it may be in place to notice a practice which is sometimes adopted, as calculated to neutralize some of the evil consequences of such a union. The practice is this: the parents agree that, peradventure, the son shall be brought up in the faith of the father, and the daughter in that of the mother. Now whatever there may be of apparent charity and forbearance between the parents in this arrangement, there is an acknowledged sacrifice of the interest of the children; for the parents mutually agree that a part of them, at least, shall be brought up in error—in error according to their own view of the question, if not in damnable heresy. This certainly is inexcusable; it is more, it is highly reprehensible, it is a violation of our obligations to God and our children, and it is an evil that can only be effectually prevented by resemblance of opinion on the part of the parents.

5. *A resemblance of condition in life.* That both the parties should be either in circumstances of indigence or affluence, be possessed of an equal amount of property, we do not design to

A pernicious error.

intimate, because there may be resemblance when there is not equality. And considerations of family may be a fair offset against those of property, and considerations of moral and intellectual worth, must, while the world stands, form an equivalent to any pretensions arising out of family distinction or extent of property. This is, at least, indisputable in our own country, where *mind is money*, and moral worth a letter of commendation endorsed by the community.

But still they act wisely, who in selecting a partner for life, make that selection from among their equals, in the common sense acceptance of the word. There is, perhaps, not a more common, nor is there a more pernicious error in the world, on this subject, than for a young man to suppose (for with them the error is more generally found) that he can rise to an honorable and influential position in society, by tacking himself on, as it were, to the skirts of some wealthy, powerful, and leading family. For even in the event of success, if he have not the energy of character requisite to rise above the humbleness of his origin, (admitting it to be humble,) the talents and genius sufficient to arrest attention, and command the homage even of the envious, he is doomed to be a mere "hewer of wood and drawer of water," the residue of his days; atten-

The true cause of unhappy marriages.

tion to him will be regarded as the veriest condescension, and any assistance will be a niggardly mercy reluctantly bestowed.

If therefore, a man have, in himself, the resources and energies requisite to rise into notice, let him exert them in his own name; he is not dependent on any such submission as above referred to, for family, fame, or fortune. In himself, he has the means of building a house of his own, with deep and broad foundations—materials fair, as light and lasting as virtue. Therefore let him not place himself in the relation of a menial servant, where he ought to be a son, nor serve as a bondman for a wife, who ought to be given to him as an equal. I say again, let him throw himself upon his own resources; and if he even find it more difficult to rise, he can ultimately rise to a more honorable elevation. His character will be the more valuable, for being a formation of his own; and it will have in the world the interest of novelty, and the force of an original and unexpected power.

Such, it appears to us, are the proper elements of a rational and Scriptural marriage; and perhaps it never, or very seldom occurs, that persons are united in matrimony with a due regard to these principles, who have any cause to regret the formation of this union. Let any

Blessedness of home.

one run his mind along the list of unhappy marriages, in the circle of his own observation, and where can one be found that is not referable to one or the other of those causes already named. The parties were unequally yoked together, in *age, disposition, education, religious opinion, or condition in life*, and hence have met with disappointment and disgust; developments of principle and disclosures of character, or outbreakings of passion which were never anticipated, and thus perhaps at a very early period in the family history, the entire prospect of life has been overcast with clouds of most gloomy and portentous appearances.

And when, on the other hand, the marriage union has been commenced and consummated under the direction of views and principles so obviously reasonable, and decidedly religious on the part of all interested, no combination of circumstances affords so fair a prospect, and so strong an assurance of a full portion of earthly enjoyment. Here misfortune cannot extinguish the ardor of affection, nor chill the tender sympathies of domestic life. The world may frown, and assume its most menacing attitudes, and the long list of ephemeral friends, who bask in the beams of another's prosperity, true to their own nature, many drop off and disappear, with the

The duties of married persons.

decline of business, and the decay of fortune. But still the tender sympathies, the sacred associations, and soul ennobling inspirations of home, remain refreshing as a spring of living waters, and unvarying as the evergreen, that retains its beauty through all the shifting seasons of the year.

Here a friend is found "that sticketh closer than a brother," here the toils and calamities of life are forgotten, at least for a season. The sympathetic smiles of an affectionate companion, and the mirthful prattle of innocent children, dispel even the gloom of misfortune, and arouse the man of sorrow from the stupor of grief. He sees that while the great world without, neither rewards his industry nor pities his disappointments, he has a world of his own in the tender combinations of domestic life. Here a stranger does not intermeddle with his joy. Here, while he is soothed by the kindness of his companion, encouraged by her counsel, and strengthened by her co-operation, he stands against the rushing flood of this world's care and turmoil, and maintains himself amidst its depressive casualties, with all the magnanimity of a man, who knows and feels that he has a wife and children—but lest we should seem to anti-

General principles.Mutual affection.

ciate what fairly belongs to another division of our subject, we proceed to notice

II. The duties arising out of this relation. To enter into particulars, so as to embrace all that might be said, would be hardly expedient. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves chiefly to general principles, embracing as much as possible, those leading points of duty in the domestic circle, which are reciprocally binding between man and wife. Of these the

1st. *Is mutual affection.*

According to the order and constitution of the divine government, man is appointed to rule in the affairs of this life. It is his prerogative to hold the reins of domestic government, and to direct the family interest, so as to bring them to a happy and honorable termination. This appointment of God is intimated in the order of the creation; and its propriety is manifested in the order of the fall. But still, as it is the right of the husband to rule, so it is his duty to rule with moderation and love—to love his wife “even as Christ loved the Church.” Eph. v. 25. And so, also, the obedience of the wife is not to be the reluctant offering of an ungracious spirit, but the cheerful service of a delighted mind; “that if any obey not

Affection gives fortitude.

the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives." 1 Pet. iii. 1—5. This affection is a most tender, sincere, and kind-hearted regard for each other, manifesting itself in all their words, spirit, and behavior. It assumes all the varied forms of forbearance, gentleness, meekness, and active sympathy, in times of bodily affliction, or mental distress; it is the spirit

"To be resigned, when ills betide,
Patient, when favors are denied,
And pleased with favors given."

If it is religiously binding on every man to love his neighbor as himself, then certainly, it is one of the plainest cases imaginable, that man and wife should love with an indefinable fervor and fixedness of affection, strengthened by all that is manly, and softened by all that is tender in human nature. Here, indeed, charity may hope all things, believe and endure all things, and even cover a multitude of sins, and violate no one's rights, nor endanger the public good. And this exercise of charity is of the very greatest importance, because that such are the duties and afflictions of domestic life, that the one cannot be discharged, nor can the other be endured, without it. Separated, in heart, either, or even both the parties, are feeble even as a bruised

Specially important in domestic life.

reed, and are unable to endure the slightest blast of adversity. But if firmly united in the bonds of a rational and fervent affection, they can endure, with sublimest fortitude, the angry shaking of the fiercest storm. The marriage compact, when formed under the influence of proper motives, principles, and affections, is like a splendid edifice rearing its majestic dome, alike amidst the clouds and sunshine of heaven, and bearing both the vicissitudes of youth, and the infirmities of age, with fortitude and cheerfulness.

The great operations of civil government, may be carried on in the absence of this heavenly principle; so also much of the pomp and bustle of active life and business excitement, may be gotten up and sustained in the hope of earthly gain or popular applause—but the more tender and sacred interests of domestic life, can never be sustained or advanced without it. The vine and the olive of domestic peace and prosperity, will never grow luxuriantly amidst the thorns and briers of family strife. They must be defended against all unnecessary exposure, even the winds of heaven must not be permitted to blow too rudely upon them, but they must be watered with tears of conjugal sympathy, and cherished with the sunshine of an undecayed affection.

Mutual confidence.Its importance.

2. *Mutual confidence.* Nothing is, or can be of more importance than this, in maintaining, in active and energetic exercise, conjugal affection. To destroy confidence, is to remove the foundations of all that is excellent or valuable in the family circle. Where this is wanting conjugal sympathy and tenderness die, and an infusion of bitterness is tasted in every thing, and the whole round of family duties becomes a heartless, hollow, and insipid thing. And hence, any thing tending, even remotely, to unhinge the faith of either party, is to be deprecated, even more than death itself. If they have secrets to keep, let them keep them to themselves; if they have wounds, let those wounds bleed inwardly—a family wound should never be exposed to the air. They should repulse as an angel of darkness and death, any one who would officiously pry into the peculiarities of their domestic history, or insinuate any thing to either, disreputable of the other. By the manifest appointment of heaven, and by the very nature of the relation they sustain, they are constituted sentinels over each other's reputation, and they should die rather than relinquish their charge.

Let it be deeply engraven on their minds, that as there are none on earth to whom they can be so nearly allied, as in the relationship existing

Wesley's opinion on the subject.

between wife and husband, so there is none in whom it ought to be their privilege to trust with more implicit confidence; and if it is otherwise, it is unfortunate, indeed;—a heavier curse one could scarcely wish upon his greatest foe. And hence neither should indulge any vague suspicions, nor fill their minds with dark and dissocial reasonings, for these are the very bane of personal as well as of domestic peace; the poison of human kindness, the very mildew of the soul, they eat into the moral constitution like rust, and canker all that is good or generous in the nature of man. Therefore, they should cultivate mutual confidence, they should honor each other's word, defend each other's reputation, nor ever relinquish their confidence, until circumstances compel the surrender. This point is thus exhibited by Mr. Wesley:

“Ye must be tender with each other's reputation. This requires two things; first, that each labors to conceal the weakness of the other, as far as possible, from all men. The husband must endeavor, that none may know his wife's faults but himself; and the wife must do her best to keep her husband's faults from the knowledge of every creature. On the contrary, to publish each other's sins, is a monstrous treachery. To backbite an enemy is a sin; how

Wesley's opinion on the subject.

much more to backbite one's own yokefellow. Whose faults can a man cover, if he cannot those of his wife, that are, in effect, his own? Or who can be free from reproach, if one so near as his wife, deface his good name? It is impossible, but man and wife must sooner or later, discover their weaknesses to one another; and for them to be playing the tell-tale against each other, what soul does not loath to think of it? If thou hast been so sinfully talkative before, now for shame lay thy hand upon thy mouth, that thou mayst no more incur the name of fool, by making thy tongue to spread abroad folly."

"But besides this, you must be faithful to keep each other's secrets. A man may have occasion to acquaint his wife with things he would not reveal to others; so a woman to acquaint her husband. Now, if in such cases, a wife finds that her husband has revealed what she entrusted to him, alone; or he finds that she has revealed what he spoke to her in the confidence of love; this will breed such a distrust of the offending party, as will not easily be removed. Wherefore, let husbands and wives always mind this: if he lay up any thing in her breast, let him find it safe there as in a chest which cannot be opened by any picklock. If she commit a thing to his safe keeping, let it be imprisoned in his bosom; other-

Mutual attention.	Reasons.
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wise no man can choose but be strange to one whom experience has convinced of blabbing. And it is an infallible truth, that there is no comfortable living with one whom we cannot trust."

3. *Mutual attention and respect.* Not the empty round of ceremonious attentions, that are ostentatiously crowded into the family circle, on certain occasions, seemingly more to please beholders, than to express the genuine sentiments of the soul. We speak of that simple, artless, and unpremeditated respect and attention, which genuine love inspires. There are, however, persons who are industrious and careful in business, skilful in the management of their affairs, high and influential in their professions; and some who are reputed persons of piety, who appear never to feel the obligation of rendering to wife or husband, as the case may be, more attention than to their domestics or their children.

There is an apparently premeditated abruptness and repulsiveness in their manners, which, like every other thorny substance, is most keenly felt by those who, unfortunately, are nearest to it. It is said, in extenuation of this fault, that it is their way, and that they mean no harm; but, even admitting this to be true, it certainly is an evil way, which they ought to abandon; a way that does no honor to themselves, and is a great

Mutual respect.Reasons.

inconvenience to others. That even persons of the most rugged temperament, can act a better part, is scarcely to be disputed. To prove this point, place them in a selection of society appropriate to your purpose, and few are more yielding or complaisant than they. We have, therefore, cause to fear that the course we now reprehend, instead of possessing what is usually claimed for it, the excellency of blunt and unvarnished simplicity and frankness, is rather an exhibition of ignorant rudeness and uncultivated pride. Respect is due to all, and especially to wife and husband, and the more so, because, whatever may be said to the contrary, much of the happiness of the present life depends on little things.

It is not the imposing majesty of a sumptuous mansion, nor the hollow glare of gaudy furniture, nor the obsequious attentions of servants; nor even of children, that makes a home of home and keeps alive the sacred blessedness of a married life. No, but it is the steady exercise of those holy charities, that sooth the sorrows, and smooth the asperities of our nature. Those little evidences of sincere esteem, those spontaneous expressions of affection and tenderness, those unpremeditated smiles and tears at each other's joy or sorrow, that affectionate officiousness, which volunteers more readily as service be-

 Mutual respect and assistance.

Reasons.

comes more difficult, these are the things that give to home its purest and most powerful attractions; where these abound, the mind reposes in all the confidence of conscious safety, and in all the satisfaction of ample enjoyment.

Mutual respect and attention between man and wife, are essential to render them respectable in the eyes of their domestics and children; and also to maintain that healthy flow of soul, that cheerfulness and buoyancy of spirit so necessary in bearing the ills, and performing the duties of life. As kindness and respectful treatment are due to all persons, so they are specially due to ourselves as wife and husband; for we cannot love those whom we do not treat respectfully, nor can they love us in return. Let it then be a principle of established authority, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, that changeth not, to extend to each other that affectionate attention which is mutually due between equals. Let every thing be studiously avoided that goes to lessen either party in their own estimation, or in that of other persons; and let it never be forgotten, that even a smile or frown, may gild with brightness, or overcast with clouds, that most sacred spot on earth, which you call home.

4. *Mutual assistance.* The first woman was given to man, not to live upon his labor, nor yet

Mutual assistance.First woman.

to labor for his living; she was designed to be one with himself, an equal sharer in his sorrows and joys, she was to be a help-meet for him. The relation in which man and wife are placed, relative to all that is either pleasurable or painful in the domestic circle, renders it not less a dictate of nature, than a precept of religion. They should bear each other's burdens, and give their united efforts in sustaining the cares, and performing the duties of life. It is true, that they both have not the same class of duties to perform; they have their different and appropriate spheres of action. But these, however, are not at variance with each other; but, like the different parts of a wisely constructed and well regulated machine, are designed and calculated to act together in perfect harmony; a harmony always heightened by the cheerful concurrence of the parties, and tending to manifest the glory of God, and swell to overflowing, the tide of their mutual happiness. There is a threefold assistance that married persons owe to each other, in giving interest and enjoyment to the family circle.

1. There is an assistance in promoting the temporal interests of the family. I now take it for granted, that neither of the parties has any separate interests, because that they ought not to have any; and hence neither the wife nor hus-

Neglect of temporal interests.

Effects.

band can say, in strict propriety, that either has, separately, an exclusive right in any thing. The husband lives for his wife, and she for her husband, and both live for their children. And, therefore, in advancing every thing which tends to ensure family comfort or respectability, that may afford the means of education to their children, or of benevolence to other persons; that may provide a defence against reverse of fortune, sickness, and premature age, both are equally concerned. Neither, therefore, should ever, for a moment, suppose that he or she is at liberty to rest or riot on the industry and good management of the other. Such a course is not only disreputable, but also criminal. And wherever it is indulged, it will inevitably render the party so offending, despicable, if not in their own eyes, yet in those of more discriminating and impartial judges.

And yet it is indisputably certain that there are many instances of this inexcusable neglect and inattention to business and domestic order; this want of manifested concern in the enlargement and stability of the family interests. It may be in one or even in both the parties—the husband and wife—in either case, it is deeply to be deplored. Peradventure the one is inattentive to his business abroad, the other to her pantry, her

Mutual indiscretion.Consequences.

wardrobe, or her person, at home ; or, it may be, that the one does not afford the requisite supplies, or the other makes a careless and wasteful distribution of them ; and thus the industry and good management of the one is perfectly neutralised, by the negligence or prodigality of the other. And in some instances, the kindness and good offices of their friends are rendered of little or no value, by the want of spirit and enterprise common to them both ; and hence poverty and want, as the inevitable consequences, ensue,—these are soon followed by the loss of confidence, coldness, indifference, and unkind allusions to the past, and mutual recriminations ; and thus all the sacred and tender familiarities of home, perish away into a cold and heartless round of chilling ceremonies.

In order to carry out this principle of mutual assistance, persons must be contented to live within their income. No man should go feasting and dashing through the country, or from city to city, as a person of fashion and show, while his wife is pining away at home ; it may be, nursing his sick or afflicted children, or bending beneath the burden of her cares—working and weeping in solitude over the painful contrast between her married and single condition ; and on the other hand, let no woman, urged on

Power of female influence.

by a silly ambition to be ranked among the more fashionable circles of life, plunge her husband into the expense of unnecessary finery and sumptuous entertainments, which he cannot afford; and thus keep him early and late at the anvil or the counter, dispirited and embarrassed in his business, until engulfed in the sorrow and confusion of a dishonorable and irremediable bankruptcy.

And here it may be proper to remark, that the power of female influence over the domestic circle and family destiny, is immense. What does it avail, if a man be ever so industrious—rise early and retire late, and eat the bread of carefulness, though he be all activity, enterprise, and management, if he have an improvident or negligent wife, if she is not a keeper at, and of home, and does not watch over the fruits of his industry; but leaves this duty to be performed by her children or domestics: in nine cases out of ten that man spends his strength for nought, and his labor in vain. Let a woman be but true to her trust, understand and manage her domestic affairs with discretion, and if she have a husband worthy of her affections, they have a strong and sufficient guarantee of prosperity and competency in the world.

There is, perhaps, more generally than is sup-

Comparison of views.

posed, a strict propriety in a frequent comparison of views and reorganization of measures for the promotion of the family interests. In order to this, it is not necessary to interrupt or displace the innocent mirthfulness of the family hearth, and to suspend the sacred charities of domestic life, by crowding into the family circle the confusion and litigious excitement of the great business world. The end here proposed, can be secured without this inconvenience; and that it ought to be, is implied in the nature of the marriage compact. The wife, most certainly, has a right to know something of the state of her husband's affairs, unless some reason of affection for her, arising out of the state of her health, or the character of her mind, dictate an opposite course as the more tender and respectful. But waiving these exceptions, such consultation is perfectly reasonable. No man would cross the ocean, or undertake a tedious and perilous journey, without first consulting with his family; and yet many do engage in business speculations not less hazardous, venture and lose their all, without consulting their families, when, if they had been consulted, the prudence, peradventure, even the timidity of the wife, might have restrained the precipitancy of the husband, and thus have averted the ruin. But this was not done; the

The advantages proposed.

family walked on securely, until in an evil hour, when worldly fancy fed on golden dreams, the rains descended, and the floods came; misfortune rushed upon them like an avalanche from some Alpine height, cold and pitiless as death, and overwhelmed them all in deep and heart-rending sorrow.

The policy here recommended, would in all probability, more generally ensure success in business; because that it would more certainly engage the hearty co-operation of all the parties; and in the event of any failure, the disappointment would be borne with greater fortitude and cheerfulness, because it would be more readily and more equally divided.

2. Again, *there is a mutual assistance in the maintenance of order—in the education and government of children.* It is difficult to say which of the parents should be the more prominent in the instruction of their offspring. If practicable, it would seem that their efforts should be conjoined, for the simple reason that both are equally interested, and the children ought to be made to regard their parents as equally concerned for their welfare.—In some cases a father, and in others the mother, will find it more convenient to impart or superintend the instruction of the children. And there may be

Education and government of children.

some unaccountable partiality on the part of the child, or peculiar aptness to teach in the parent, or some other cause may serve to indicate the will of God in relation to this question. There have been many instances of great intellectual and moral worth, apparently the result of maternal instructions, and others again not less illustrious, who have been more immediately indebted to a father's care. But the ordinary and high way of heaven's appointment to the development of the mind, and proper formation of the moral powers, calls for the combined efforts of both the parents. In this department of their duty, two evils are to be carefully avoided; first, the conflicting views and feelings between the parents themselves; and secondly, the interference of domestic relations.

The rights of parents in their children, are equal. If those children are honorable and prosperous in the world, it is the happiness of both. If they are prodigal and vicious, it is not more the misfortune of the one than of the other.

It is, therefore, a self-evident duty, and one most solemnly binding on parents, to contribute their united skill, influence, and authority, to "train up their children in the way they should go."

A common evil.Results.

But most unfortunately, it occasionally happens that one of those parents, perhaps not intentionally, but yet most effectually, neutralises the instruction and salutary discipline exercised by the other, by a very unseasonable and ill-judged expression of affection. It may be that the child is negligent or disobedient, or by some irregularity of life, has rendered it highly proper, if not strictly necessary, to visit its transgression with stripes; and the parent privy to the offence, proceeds to discharge the duty, however painful, of correcting the delinquent child. When to his or her infinite regret, and the permanent injury of the youthful offender, the chastisement of the one is worse than destroyed by the caresses of the other, and the correction administered as a wholesome medicine, is changed into a deadly poison—a savor of death unto death, by a declaration on the part of the opposing parent, that it was unjust and cruel, and ought not to have been inflicted. And it may be that the child is even petted and soothed with sweetmeats, and assurances of protection in time to come.

Thus the seeds of domestic anarchy and fire-side rebellion and confusion, are thickly sown in the very soil where, by the appointment of heaven, every virtue ought to be carefully planted and nurtured with the most prayerful assiduity

Domestic relations.

and tenderness. Parents should remember that neither suffers separately by such imprudence. Their interests are identical and indivisible, and they ought to know that the child who does not regard the one, will soon learn to despise the other of its parents. And therefore they should most studiously avoid the manifestation of any opposition of sentiment or of policy in the administration of the family government; they should honor each other's judgment and intentions, in the sight of their children; and if they have any diversity of opinion, let them adjust it privately, and harmonise their views with prayer, in the sight and fear of God; remembering that a house divided against itself, is soon brought to desolation.

Reprehensible as is the practice here referred to, we now turn to one still more so; it is the officious and uncalled for interference of domestic relations—relations living in the family, actuated by a class of feelings peculiar to themselves, and it may be arising out of the relation they sustain to the domestic circle. They appear to think to render themselves more acceptable to the parents, by the manner in which they demean themselves towards the children. And hence they not unfrequently conceal or extenuate their faults, and with equal violence to truth, commend and

Mutual assistance in spiritual interests.

exalt their virtues; and in those seasons of retribution inseparable from a well-ordered family government, rush in between the offended parent and the guilty child, as the self-constituted protectors of the little culprit. Peradventure, the child is seized as in a paroxysm of compassion, and is torn away from the hand of the correcting parent, and is thus taught to regard even a distant relation as their guardian angel, and their own parents as unpitying and cruel persecutors.

In what particular class of crime, to give such conduct its appropriate location, is difficult to say—it is almost a nameless wickedness against the domestic circle. It is a sin against the parents and the child, the Church and the State, against heaven and earth. Parents are specially concerned in preventing any such invasion of their rights, and of the established order of heaven. they should never consent to such a surrender of their authority under any pretence whatever, seeing they can never make a corresponding transfer of their responsibilities.

3. *There is also a mutual assistance in promoting each other's spiritual welfare.* It is manifestly a divine appointment, that human beings should be instrumental in the advancement of each other's happiness, generally, and certainly it is not less a suggestion of nature,

Domestic persecution.

than a duty of religion, that the more nearly persons are related, the more deeply they should sympathise in each other's pleasures or pains; and the more ardently they should labor for each other's felicity, and most of all should husband and wife, "who are no more twain, but one flesh," exemplify this principle before their family, and before the world.

If that man be justly regarded as a domestic despot—a man without a heart, who should tyrannise over the weakness and dependent condition of his wife—who through a mean and niggardly capriciousness, should deny her the ordinary comforts and enjoyments of life, then most certainly the vocabulary of earth does not contain an epithet sufficiently expressive of scorn, appropriately to describe the man, who binds the conscience of his wife, as it were, in chains of affliction and iron, and thus keeps her in continual dread of losing her soul, merely to gratify his graceless bigotry.

And yet there are instances in which persons plight their solemn vows of fidelity and affection to others of religious opinions adverse to their own, secretly intending to compel a reception of their own distinctive sentiments, by argument if they can, but by coercive measures if need be. But who can give utterance to the

Should pray for each other.

detestation, which every upright mind must feel, against a person of this description, who, while he is smiling with all the apparent cheerfulness of a bridegroom's heart, is secretly meditating with cold creeping hypocrisy, the un pitying persecution of a heartless bigot; or who, after the irrevocable amen of the marriage ceremony, tears his new made wife from all her well tried friends, and dearly loved religious associations? Surely such a one knows but little of the sympathy, that should bind even man to man, and that constitutes the great active principle of terrestrial happiness; and still less does he know of the principles and affections, which give confidence comfort, and sanctity to the marriage union, and, least of all, of the spirit and power of the religion of Christ Jesus.

If, as is the case in many instances, business calls, or professional duties render it impracticable for the heads of a family frequently to read and pray together, and thus to confirm each other's faith, and to afford mutual defence against the temptations and discouragements of life; they are, nevertheless, to pray for each other, and to cultivate a lively and active sympathy and regard for each other's welfare. For there never can come up a period in life, nor can we conceive of any combination of circum-

Additional reflections.

stances, that render it even allowable in either to abridge the privileges, or trammel the conscience of the other. By all that is sacred in nature, or that is holy in religion, they are bound to care for each other's souls; not only to avoid giving any just cause of offence, or placing a stumbling block in the way, but also to afford such means and facilities of improvement, as it may be in their power to command; and thus to help each other to work out their salvation with fear and trembling before God. As by the appointment of God, the husband is the head of the family, and claims and exercises the authority of a ruler, he ought also to bear in mind, that it is not less his duty to be equally prominent in promoting the spiritual interests of his house. Jos, xxiv. 15.

In addition to these general views, we may here, with propriety, notice some other special duties, which are mutually due between man and wife. Thus it is required of woman to show a spirit of subordination, and to obey her husband." Eph. v, 22. But it is also required of the husband that he love and protect his wife—that he cultivate for her the most tender affection—that he protect her according to his power, in person—health—property—and reputation. Every thing pertaining to her com-

Additional reflections.

fort, should be granted, as far as in his power, with a ready and cheerful mind. "He is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church." Eph. v, 25. "As it is required of the wife, that she reverence her husband, not as a superior being, but as her superior in the domestic economy; and that, therefore, she should not usurp authority over the man, because Adam was first formed, then Eve." 1 Tim. ii, 11, 14. So it is also binding on the husband not to render himself ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of his wife, by any indecencies of speech, or vile and trifling associations. He is to maintain his place, not so much by physical power or brute force, as by the excellency of his example, and those developments of mental and moral superiority, and greater tact in the management of affairs, which it is reasonable to expect from his relation, and which will, in most cases, insure a ready and cheerful submission to rule. 1 Pet. iii, 3, 7. Again, as it is the duty of the woman to be a keeper at home, and not to be wandering from her place, like an unhappy spirit seeking rest and finding none, Titus, ii, 5, so most unquestionably, it is the duty of the husband to render that home as interesting and cheerful as possible. Let him throw around it, all the attractions he can—let him render it

Additional reflections.

cheerful with the music of his own voice, and instructive with the fruit of his own reading and experience. Let him share in the little details of domestic toil, nor think it unworthy a man to assist in nursing his young, or ministering to his afflicted children. Thus "let every one, in particular, love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." Eph. v. 33.

A marriage union thus enlightened by reason, cemented by affection, and sanctified by religion, sustained by its appropriate sympathies, and an undeviating fidelity, by a cheerful co-operation in carrying forward the interests, and establishing the reputation of the domestic circle on a pure and Scriptural basis, is one of the sweetest scenes of earthly felicity, and holiest associations of human nature; over which the monarchy of heaven presides. Such the marriage union was at its first institution, and such it is designed to be even now, and so to continue until time shall be no more; and its high and sacred typical allusions shall be consummated at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

III. We shall conclude this discourse with some miscellaneous reflections. The advantages resulting to society from this institution, are numerous, and in point of importance, great

Concluding reflections.

beyond all calculation. It would be interesting to take some notice of these, and to exhibit them in contrast with the wretched and loathsome state of things, which would inevitably ensue upon a dissolution generally, of this most sacred compact. And this, indeed, would be indispensable, in a discourse designed to defend the institution against the scoffs and raillery of licentious infidels and atheistic debauchees; but we address ourselves to another class of persons, who, while they acknowledge the Divine origin and sacred obligations of the marriage contract, do not sufficiently consider the manner in which it stands related to all that is amiable, praiseworthy, or of good report among men. We shall, therefore, dispense with the views above referred to. Our

1. *Reflection relates to such as make the institution an instrument of gain.* How superlatively vile is the spirit, and infamous the conduct of that man who prostitutes this most sacred appointment of the living God, into a mere means of accumulating wealth. Who regards the marriage union as a monied speculation, who, if the expression may be allowed, gambles for the affections of a woman, only as the means of approach to her wealth, and seeks her union in marriage, to gratify his cold blooded avarice.

Marriages for gain a vice.

The love of gain is the master passion of his bosom, and provided this can be satisfied, then every other feeling is bribed into a temporary concurrence in the sacrilegious arrangement. What does he care for temper, education, personal appearance, or accomplishments, age, disposition, piety, or any other thing that gives pure and soul-winning attractions to woman? Gain is the god that he worships, and to this idol of his own choice, with all the fanaticism of an Asiatic devotee, he offers in willing sacrifice his deathless soul.

It would be startling to any simple and unsuspecting mind, whose thoughts have not been turned to such investigations of character, to see unveiled, the bosom of any one of these unprincipled speculators on female credulity, and to witness the reasonings of their heartless cupidity, on the pecuniary advantages they are to reap from such a legalised villany. Having ascertained the extent of her fortune, houses, lands, stocks, and ready cash, this heartless form of a man, sets himself to gain the affection of his victim, not that he cares for the love of any living thing, but merely as the price which he reluctantly pays for the possession of her person and property.

Is it to be wondered at that marriages formed

Such marriages wretched.

under the influence of so much deception, such sordid and selfish views, should be followed by the most unhappy and lamentable results? When a woman sees, that instead of having married a man, she has been united to a monster; and that her husband only took that sacred name and relation, the more effectually to plunder and enslave her; that the man who swore, as in the presence of God, that his love for her was sincere and without guile, and that his fidelity should never be broken; when she sees that unkind and cruel man wasting in dissipation and folly, even that substance which was once all her own, earned by the industry, and bequeathed by the kindness of her parents; and treating her with increasing coldness and indifference, as her property is becoming exhausted. Is it, I inquire, surprising that her soul within her, should recoil at his sight, and even court the grave as an asylum from his brutality?

But we may trace this crime in connection with another class of agents. We refer to those parents, (to the shame of human nature be it spoken,) who form all their matrimonial arrangements for their children, on the principle of loss and gain; it is with them exclusively a matter of dollars and cents. Marriage contracts, on this single principle, are formed and broken by them,

A case for illustration.

or at their instance, without any regard to either God or man, religion or law. With them, property is the all-essential qualification. Their children are said to marry well, as they marry wealth, and their sons-in-law and daughters-in-law are esteemed only in proportion to their property, apart from all consideration of mental or moral worth.

To exhibit this vice in its proper light, we will suppose a case that frequently occurs:—A young man solicits the hand of their daughter in marriage, but rumor says he is somewhat irregular in his habits. He has been seen in a state of intoxication; it is currently reported that he is loose in his morals, and he has been seen in very disreputable society, and in places of worse than doubtful character. But he has property, an independent fortune, and although a mere animal, a man in the lowest sense of that word, it is esteemed a good chance, a fine speculation. The parents consult together, and agree to forward the union; the daughter receives the intimation, and hesitates or revolts. She cannot love what is so essentially unlovely, she resists, weeps, and refuses to be seen. The parents frown and chide her; and interdict all other society, they extenuate the young man's faults, and exaggerate his worth, if he have any. If

Extract from Wesley.

he have none, they fabricate it for him; his family, parents, and relations are referred to; and thus, at length, with incessant urgings, frowns, and smiles, her resistance gives way, not very unlike a city taken by stratagem, and she consents to a reluctant union with a man, who possessing, it may be, the wealth of a prince, is controlled by the passions of a pirate.

We do not say that a proper regard to the temporal interests of their children is reprehensible in parents. We have named the evil to which we refer, and it would be the wildest presumption imaginable, for any one to hope that marriages thus framed, could be any thing but miserable; disappointment and disgust must inevitably ensue, with their long train of painful and humiliating reflections to canker and eat into the soul like fire. Let those parents involved in the above reflections, consider the awful responsibility they thus incur, and the force with which it may recoil upon them unexpectedly, at the last day. We conclude this view of our subject with the following strong language from the Rev. J. Wesley's sermon on the single eye. "I cannot dismiss this subject yet, as it is of the utmost importance. How great is the darkness of that execrable wretch (I can give him no better title, be he rich or poor) who will sell his own

Extract from Wesley.

child to the devil! Who will barter her own eternal happiness for any quantity of gold or silver. What a monster would any man be accounted, who would devour the flesh of his own offspring. And is not he as great a monster, who by his own act and deed, gives her to be devoured by a roaring lion, as he certainly does, (so far as is in his power,) who marries her to an ungodly man? But he is rich!—but he has ten thousand pounds!! What if it were an hundred thousand? The more the worse; the less probability will she have of escaping the damnation of hell. With what face wilt thou look upon her, when she tells thee in the realms below, ‘Thou hast plunged me into this place of torment. Hadst thou given me a good man, however poor, I might now have been in Abraham’s bosom. But O what have riches profited me! They have sunk both me and them into hell!’

“Are any of you that are called Methodists, thus merciful to your children. Seeking to *marry them well*, (as the cant phrase is,) that is, to sell them to some purchaser that has much money, but little or no religion? Is, then, the light that is in *you* also become darkness? Are ye too regarding God less than mammon? Are ye also without understanding? Have ye profited no more by all ye have heard? Man—

Wesley's opinion on the subject.

woman—think what ye are about! Dare you, also, sell your child to the devil? You doubtless do this, (as far as in you lies,) when you marry a son or daughter to a child of the devil, though it be one that wallows in gold and silver. O take warning. Beware of the gilded bait! Death and hell are hid beneath. Prefer grace before gold and precious stones; glory in heaven, to riches on earth. If you do not, you are worse than the very Canaanites. They only made their children pass *through the fire* to Moloch. You make yours pass *into the fire* that shall never be quenched, and to stay there forever. O how great is the darkness that causes you, after you have done this, to wipe your mouth, and say you have done no harm!”

Again, we may view this sin in connection with still another agency not less wicked, and if possible, still more indelicate, for whatever may be the intrinsic merits of the case, there is a common understanding, that for a woman to seek a husband either by force or fraud, is both a violation of good manners, and a risk of moral virtue.

And yet that this is sometimes done, and with woful effect, is no more to be disputed than the forms of vice referred to in the preceding remarks. This is not unfrequently the result of

Match making.

that most infamous practice of match making, which obtains, in some sections of country—a scheme is devised by one or more minds, which shall, in its progressive development, ensnare an old or young man as the case may be, and place him in such a situation that his conduct and conversation may be tortured into an implied promise of marriage, a thing which he could never have hoped for, and which, because he never thought of, he never feared. But no sooner are the plans fairly adjusted, and in efficient operation, than incidental disclosures advise him of the real state of affairs. Most gladly would this unsuspecting victim of a combination, now hasten his escape from the windy storm and tempest; but it is too late, he is threatened with the penalties of the law, and the anathemas of religion. The state is invoked to unsheath the sword of civil power, and the church is called upon to fulminate her thunders, and all to satisfy the pure love of some venerable widow, or still more venerable virgin. Terrified by such an array, the party most deeply interested consents to be persecuted into a married life. The parties have a special meeting in the presence of select friends, a marriage contract is formed, (shame, where is thy blush!) writings are drawn, and an agreement is entered

Marriage contracts.

into; it is signed, sealed and delivered. And what is its import? Why, that the parties will live together as man and wife, but have no part or interest in each other's property; these are by previous stipulations, as separate as before the marriage, and are watched over with an increased solicitude and jealousy proportioned to the increase of danger. I submit it to any one to say, whether there is not here, a most shameless exhibition of two of the most unseemly passions in human nature grappling with each other, licentiousness and avarice. In this case, the woman declares in the presence of God and man, that she does love, and will love a man, whom she has taken as her husband for better or worse, and to whom she actually commits the keeping of her person, but still she would not trust him with even a few hundred dollars.

Is not this a manifest desecration of the institution? Can it be said, in truth, of any two persons, after such an arrangement, that they are no more twain, but one flesh? Are they not two in every sense, but one. It is admitted that they live in the same house, and form a part of the same family compact, but they have two separate *hearts, interests* and *agencies*; we may excuse

The practice inexcusable.

The wild herd of nymphs and swains,
That thoughtless fly into the chains,
As custom leads the way.

The weakness and thoughtlessness of youth are their apology, but there is no apology for persons of this class, who, with the coolness of philosophy, and the cupidity of avarice itself, take upon themselves the vows of a married life, after having entered into such stipulations, as to a great extent, divest it of its interest, and neutralise the ends of the appointment. But let us turn from these to more pleasing contemplations.

2. Our next reflection, regards the *sacred intimacy and indissoluble nature of the marriage union*. 'They, said our Lord, are no more twain but one flesh. They have no separate interests, nor ought they to have any; one home, one heart, and one interest in temporal things, is all they need; and hence, they should ever cultivate that tender regard for each other, which distinguished the commencement, and especially the consummation of their union. They are not to expect all that fancy can picture of connubial felicity; but are to keep in mind, that much of earthly happiness is the result of forbearance and meekness, gentleness and fortitude, and those milder traits of character, which

Meekness and forbearance recommended.

pure religion inspires. And it is also to be kept in mind, that persons often err unintentionally, and wound their friends without design; and that there are seasons of depression, unwatchfulness and nervous gloom, which a hasty spirit would censure, but which rather give special claims to our sympathies and assistance, our pity and our prayers. In the language of an old author, ‘bear then, with the faults of those about you, as you expect they should bear with yours. Faults which *frail nature* cannot well guard against, and which *good nature* should overlook. Be just to their merits, charitable to their failings, and tender to their misfortunes. All other ornaments fade and decay, and sorrow or age makes *beauty consume away like as it were a moth fretting a garment*. There is *only one unfading beauty*, one *undecaying* ornament, which is of infinitely more worth than all the rest, and that is the *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*.” Seed’s Ser.

Every other relation is to be held subordinate to this; for this cause, (said our Lord,) shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be one. From that impressive moment in which they are pronounced man and wife, they have no separate joy or sorrow. They both drink the same cup,

Sacredness of marriage,

whether it be of nectar or of gall. They have the same perils, the same griefs, the same pleasures and pains,

“They share each other’s woes,
Each other’s burden bear
And often for each other flows
The sympathising tear.”

Life is never a sunny day throughout. It is subject to clouds, and even to storms; to many and painful vicissitudes, but still they are one, sacredly and inseparably one. And O how tender is that identity of character, interest, and sympathy of flesh and soul, which sets at defiance the rude blasts of misfortune, and remains unchanged amidst the shifting scenes of this inconstant world. Thus understood, this certainly is one of the most beneficent appointments of an indulgent Providence. Here the human heart has its proper point of attraction, and the full tide of human sympathy is taught to ebb and flow, under regulations appointed and approved by heaven.

O how sacred is that home where every word is kindness, and every look affection! Where the ills and sorrows of life are borne by mutual effort, and its pleasures are equally divided; and where each esteems the other the more worthy. Where a holy emulation abounds to excel in

Its blessedness.

offices of kindness, and affectionate regard. Where, the live-long day, the week, the month, the year, is a scene of cheerful and unwearied effort to swell the tide of domestic comfort, and overflow the heart with home-born enjoyments. That home may be the humblest hovel on earth, there heart meets heart, in all the fondness of a full affection. And wherever that spot is found, there is an exemplification of all that is lovely and of good report among men. It is heaven begun below.

In conclusion, if we would enjoy the advantages of wealth, or endure the inconveniences of poverty; if we would render youth safe, or age cheerful; if we would be loved while living, or affectionately remembered when dead, then let us regulate our lives in regard to this institution, according to the revealed will of God; and in that event, we shall hereafter renew and perpetuate forever in heaven, those pious affections we shall have formed on earth. And after having borne each other's burdens in this vale of tears, we shall share and heighten each other's felicity in the society of the redeemed, and in the city of God.

DISCOURSE II.

DUTY OF PARENTS.

Eph. vi. 4. "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

ONE of the most sacred and honorable relations sustained by man, is that more prominently recognised in the text. This differs essentially from all those formed among men, having their foundations chiefly in the calculations of interest, the cravings of passion, or the suggestions of policy.

It is confessedly honorable to be a friend of the destitute, a benefactor of the poor, a guide or an instructor of the ignorant and forsaken; a judge, legislator, or civil ruler of the people. But, then, there is still, even in these relations, much that is remote and precarious. They do not necessarily imply habits of special intimacy or the sympathies of personal friendship, and hence they are liable to be interrupted, suspended, or even destroyed; and that under such circumstances as will forever preclude the possibility of their re-establishment.

Responsibilities of a Parent.

But a man once a father, is a father forever. He may be subject to many and painful vicissitudes of fortune, to loss of friends, estate, and reputation. He may be exiled from the playgrounds of his youth, and the sepulchres of his ancestry; he may be doomed to all that is drudge-like in labor, that is painful in suffering, or that is loathsome in disease. He may be reduced from the loftiest elevation of fame and fortune, to the humblest hovel in the vale of obscurity, but once a father, he is a father forever.

The ever-moving tide of earthly affairs, may remove his children to a distance, the most remote; disease may enfeeble, or accident may maim; prodigality may reduce them to want, or crime incarcerate them in the gloom of a prison, yea, even expose them as the devotees of vice, infamously suspended on the gibbet, but still the relation continues, the indestructible character of the father remains as firm as when at first his infant's cries kindled parental feelings in his bosom.

Hence we ought to regard the birth of our children as an event having an eternity of importance associated with it. Our children appear on this stage of action, candidates for endless felicity or woe. A destiny of honor or infamy, of pleasure or pain, is inevitable; be happy or

The subject of discussion.Difficult.

miserable, they must ; either the joys of heaven, or the fires of hell, must conclude their history ; and much, very much depends on parents, in which of these states their children shall find their ultimate and unalterable doom.

The responsibility of parents is, therefore, one of fearful magnitude, and one that should be most scrupulously regarded with an humble dependence on the divine assistance, and a steady reference to that future and eternal world, where the transactions of the present life will be matter of careful review, and impartial retribution. With these impressions on our minds, let us examine our duty as it is set forth in the text.

I. Let us explain the prohibition, “ And ye father’s provoke not your children to wrath.”

By wrath, here, we may understand evil in general ; and to provoke, in the sense of the text, to expose, to tempt, or to vex ; ‘Provoke not your children to wrath,’ is therefore, a command of very extensive import.

The subject here to be explained, is one involving so many interests and parties, and so much feeling, that it is difficult to place it in a proper light without seeming to say more than is strictly necessary, or can be fully justified by

Importance of knowing our duty.

actual experience; and parents, also, are very properly jealous of their rights in their children, and are instinctively fearful of any thing that might inflate their minds with principles of insubordination. And far be it from me to slacken the reins of parental authority, which are now, most unfortunately, only too loosely held by those who should "command their children after them." But after all, what we must do, on the one hand, and what we dare not do on the other, in order to maintain a conscience void of offence, towards God and our children, is a question of immense moment. And where to find the medium ground between a criminal laxity of discipline, and a domestic despotism; how to grant our children the proper indulgence, and to impose the necessary restraints, these are questions that have perplexed the minds, and agitated the bosom of many devoted parents. If this text does not give a perfectly full and satisfactory answer to these questions, it does most certainly point out a line of conduct in every way, according to reason, and highly conducive to domestic order and filial devotion, as well as the more important ends of virtue and religion.

X Parents are addressed in the text; for although fathers only are named, it is not because that they are the only responsible party, but simply

Domestic oppression.

in view of the fact that they are the more prominent, and ought to be the more influential in the maintaining of good order in the family government. Both the parents are alike interested in bringing up their children in the way they should go, and both are cautioned in the text, not to give them needless provocation.

In our original condition, the ordinary instincts of human nature would have been sufficient to have insured the course of conduct here enjoined. But fallen, as man now is, by sin; perverted by prejudice, and enslaved by passion, neither the instincts of nature, nor the more authoritative voice of God, speaking in his holy word, is sufficient to secure that attention to children, that their ignorance, weakness, want of experience, and dependent condition require. How very few bring them up in the way they should go? And how often are their feelings, interests, and reputation, sported with as a thing of nought, by an arbitrary or capricious parent? The text assumes the fact, that parents may, and in some instances do, provoke their children to wrath, and under cover of this assumption, we proceed to remark that this is done in some instances.

1. By instituting an arbitrary and oppressive form of domestic government. Parents are most tenderly to regard, and religiously to watch

Domestic oppression.

over the temper and spiritual interests and rights of their children. For children have rights to protection, support, education, and all the character that parents can give them. And therefore, they are not to be provoked by withholding these things; or by severity, contempt, or indifference.

But, nevertheless, there are instances in which it does occur, that parents overlook these facts, and apparently forget that all government, whether designed to regulate the interests of the state, the church, or the family, is a reasonable institution, arising either out of the nature or necessities of society, designed for the benefit of all, especially of the governed; and is, therefore to be administered according to the calm dictates of enlightened reason, and is not to be a mere matter of caprice or despotism. Overlooking these facts, I say, parents do sometimes require implicit submission, not only without reason, but manifestly against it. Obedience is demanded as if merely for the pleasure of exercising authority; and it is very much to be feared, that there are other cases in which parents experiment upon the temperament of their children, by compelling submission to their will, when even the propriety of the act is questionable; if, indeed, it be even lawful.

Children to be treated with tenderness and affection.

Let no one suppose that we design, in this discourse, to question or unsettle the authority of parents. No; it is our design to secure the more efficient exercise of that authority, on Scriptural principles, and in such a manner as will maintain the honor of the parents, while it shall subserve the best interests of the children. Let it, then, be distinctly understood, that whatever may be the extent and nature of that authority with which parents are invested, they are by no means irresponsible. Like every other wisely-appointed government, the domestic economy is subject to law, and every one intrusted with its administration, is required to conform to the revealed will of God, as the constitution under which it is instituted, or abide the consequences of the divine displeasure.

And, therefore, although it may not be expedient for parents, at all times, to treat their children literally as equals, it certainly is highly improper and reprehensible to treat them at any time as slaves. Let them, at least, be regarded as friends, yea, even more than friends; let them be treated as what they truly are, a subordinate, but an important part of their parents. Let their confidence be reciprocated, and thus make them respectable in their own eyes, and in those of other persons, by respecting them yourselves.

The violation of this principle.

Children ought never to receive the impression that their interests are separate from, and at variance with those of their parents, and hence, when they are of sufficient age and experience, it may be wise to allow them at least a hearing on any great and important transaction, involving the interest of the family. Thus they will be taught to regard their interests, as identified with that of their parents; and to obey your commands will be their highest ambition, because it will be their interests.

But how often is this manifest dictate of reason and true regard to family peace and confidence, sacrificed by an inconsiderate, though well meaning parent, to a cold, suspicious and repulsive love of power, in itself absurd, and in its consequences, pernicious. Every thing in the domestic government, is managed with a dark and frowning severity. The father goes in and out before his children, surrounded with an air, cold as death, and scarcely less repulsive; and thus, as a natural consequence, although unintentional, he cramps the intellect, alienates the affections, hardens the heart, and destroys the enterprise of his child, who only views himself as a prisoner at large, and looks forward to the period of his separation from home as to the termination of a painful captivity, a year of

Its effects.

jubilee; home, in his mind, is always associated with ideas of severity, indifference or suspicious treatment; and is, therefore, cheerfully relinquished under the slenderest pretence, or the feeblest hope of improvement, because it is the only place on earth, where being known, he is not trusted.

We do not say, nor would we even insinuate, that all children, who unnaturally leave their homes, exchanging the peaceful and harmless scenes of the fireside for the dangers of the ocean, or the bloody honors of a military life, are driven by parental severity, to adopt, in despair, these courses of life; no, by no means. Many thus abandon themselves to every peril of morals, mind and life, in the pride and perverseness of their nature, and in open opposition to the remonstrances, entreaties and tears of their parents, who have done all in their power to invest home with the strongest possible attractions, and yet have done all in vain. But this does by no means justify the policy of those parents, who, by an unnatural and unnecessary austerity, throw off their children from them, and then, through a cruel pride and want of sympathy, widen the distance between themselves and their own offspring, until the gulf becomes impassable. "Fathers provoke not

Incautious marriages a provocation.

your children to wrath lest they be discouraged." Col. iii. 21.

2. Another modification of this evil is in the formation of rash and unkind associations, by which the internal structure of the family is perfectly changed. That a man is at liberty to do as inclination may prompt him, in organising his family, or administering the domestic government, although viewed as a self evident truth, is a position that we suppose, no one can maintain. The text intimates, that there are limits to a father's authority; he is not to provoke his children to wrath; he is to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And, of course, he is not to originate difficulties which will render the performance of these duties impracticable.

If it would be wicked or reprehensible in a parent to bring into his family, as permanent members thereof, persons whose minds, morals and general habits of life, would be an injury or an affliction to his children, as briars in their sides, and as thorns in their eyes, tending to abridge their privileges and alienate his affections from them, and thus to deprive them of his protection, what shall we say of those matrimonial alliances, formed between persons from the opposite extremes of life, as well as of mind

Incautious marriages.

and fortune. Marriages, by which a person comparatively young, is brought into a family, to sustain the relation, and exercise the authority of a parent, over children, at least his or her equals, if not superiors, in every respect; in age, information, manners and mind; and who have anticipated the event, as an affliction, and have protested against it, as unreasonable, unnatural, oppressive and unjust.

It is deeply to be regretted, and humiliating to refer to the fact, that connections of the kind here referred to, are but very seldom discreet; but on the other hand, it is often the case that the wishes, interests and feelings of, perhaps, a numerous family, are sacrificed to the blinded passions of an inconsiderate parent, who rushes on the attainment of his prize, in perfect forgetfulness of consequences. For most unfortunately, as a general rule, this class of marriages is entered into with a manifest want of thought and impetuosity of feeling, scarcely excusable even in the vigor of life.

We speak not of the abstract question of marriages between old and young persons, men of fifty, and girls of fifteen; the buoyancy of youth smiles at the association as ludicrous; considerate age abhors it as unnatural, and piety de-

Consequences.

nounces it as sacrilegious; but we confine our views to the question simply as it stands related to this subject, and becomes a provocation of children; and this we imagine is more frequently the case than otherwise.

In how many instances such a course has been attended with the most unhappy results, eternity alone can tell. On the one hand, disappointment and disgust, and on the other a sickening mortification of feeling have ensued. The fruitful field has become a scene of desolation. The evergreen of parental fondness and filial affection, has been displaced, and brambles and briars of most poisonous thorn, have shot up luxuriantly in all the haughty pride of an unnatural usurpation, where once grew the lily and the rose of domestic innocence and love. The voice of the turtle has died away, and the piercing shriek of the midnight owl, now fills with horror and alarm, that home once the abode of peace and rejoicing. The sympathies of parents have been diverted from their natural channels, and children alienated in heart from those who gave them birth, have dropped like fruit prematurely ripe, from the parent stock. Strangers have been called in to meddle with strife not their own, family confidence has been sacrificed, and the secrecies of the fireside have been given to the

Another method of provocation.

winds of heaven. And thus a house has been divided against itself, and has come to irreparable desolation.

Is this a mere sketch of imagination, an idle dream, having no existence whatever in fact? Would to heaven it were; but it is a solemn and humiliating truth, recorded on the tablet of many a bleeding heart. O what numbers have sought the darkest solitude, and even courted the silence of the grave, as a refuge from the soul withering sorrow of such painful recollections.

3. As another method of provocation, we mention cruel or unnatural punishment. We have now more particularly reference to those forms of punishment that are prospective in their bearing, and unalterable in their results.

That it is not only allowable, but also strictly necessary, that parents should correct their children, in given cases, will be disputed by none who regard either the authority or examples of the Holy Scriptures; "For foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." Prov. xxii. 15. It is manifestly, therefore, not less a dictate of reason and of affection, than a precept of religion, to enforce authority even with stripes, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Prov. xiv. 18.

Arbitrary distinctions.

But then they are never to substitute a sceptre of iron for the rod of parental chastisement.

If a judge, who inflicts the penalties of the law, merely to vent his personal ire, or to avenge personal wrongs, is justly held in abhorrence by every good and honest man; is not that parent highly reprehensible who pours his boiling wrath upon his child in abusive speech and cruel blows, and endeavors to extenuate or justify his conduct, under the plea of an unusual excitement of passion. Surely with such an example, a child can scarcely be otherwise than vicious. And most certainly, parents ought to remember, that with such an accumulation of poison in the fountain, evil must be expected in the stream. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place, sweet water and bitter; can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries, either a vine figs?" James iii, 11, 12. But to place this view of the subject in its proper light, we remark that a parent's displeasure is manifested in some instances,

1. *By creating an unnatural and arbitrary distinction between his children;* in which one is, without any sufficient reason, made subordinate to another, and thus one is elevated and another depressed. One is treated as a person of distinction, the other as a mere drudge; the one

Absurd method of education.

is caressed, the other held off and neglected; the one is denominated, "my dear son," the other, "that boy, that dull fellow;" the first is clad in a princely coat of many colors, the other is a keeper of the herds. All of which tends to break the spirit of the neglected, and to inflate with pride, the mind of the pampered child, and to lay deep and broad the foundations of dark or cruel envy and jealousy, if not of incurable strife. Of the truth of this sentiment, we have a most thrilling illustration in the histories of Jacob and Esau. (See Gen. xxvii.) And of Joseph and his brethren. (See Gen. xxxviii.) These histories read a lesson of most startling import to all parents on this abuse of their authority, but

2. In other cases, a father's displeasure is made known *by withholding the means of education and improvement*; or by what is nearly the same thing, crossing the natural inclination of the child, and by forcing the whole current of his thoughts, and the full tide of his feelings to ebb and flow in a channel for which nature never designed them. The child is held down to a course of life, a description of study or of business, for which he is not only without natural inclination or fitness, but for which he actually possesses strong constitutional antipathies; and yet to complete the provocation, improvement is

The principle here laid down, reasonable.

demanded under pain of parental displeasure. And thus it frequently happens that parents, instead of inquiring into the natural capabilities of their children, and regulating their demands accordingly, institute the same modes of instruction, and impose the same forms of discipline on all, however numerous the family. No regard is had to the natural variety in the original character of their minds, their modes of thought, and habits of feeling; circumstances never to be overlooked in training up our children for the active scenes, and increasing responsibilities of life.

The principle here laid down is one that is almost universally acted upon in other affairs of infinitely less importance. Men do not apply the same process of cultivation to soils, essentially different, and much less do they expect from them the same description of produce. And why then, should they attempt to force the human mind against the law of its own nature, and especially as it is well understood to be a principle contrary to all analogy, and manifestly at variance with the acknowledged appointments of heaven? With as much reason might we expect the feathered tribes of the air to perform the labor of beasts of burden, or the quadruped tenants of the field to fly at large in the expanse of heaven, as our children to make

The worst form of parental severity.

proficiency in those things, for which nature never designed them, and for which they have not the requisite capacity. It is, therefore, a heavy provocation to impose on them such a course of life, and especially to enforce it by harsh and penal considerations.

3. Another form of parental severity, and still more reprehensible because apparently more vindictive, is that by which a father (as far as in him lies) *dooms his child to penury and want*, for, perhaps, a trivial offence; or one in which, peradventure, he has followed his parental guides. The name of the offender is stricken from the family records. He is not recognised in the will; he is overlooked in the distribution of the estate, and thus the mark of a father's curse is set upon him, and the child is sent out from the presence of his parent, like Cain, to be a fugitive in all the earth.

Most certainly this is, of all parental punishment, the most unwarrantable. Some may ask, "has not a man to do as he will, with his own property?" I answer, that no man has an absolute right to any thing in his possession. He is but a steward of the manifold mercies of God; and in the order of heaven holds his property for the benefit of others, his own family first of all; and further, it is required of a steward that a

The worst form of parental severity.

man be found faithful. But can any man, after having been instrumental in bringing children into this world of sickness, labor, and sorrow, leave them, intentionally, without the help that they need, and that he has it in his power to afford them, and still be accounted faithful? Most certainly not. Has he a right to bestow his substance on others, and leave them naked, destitute, and friendless; the more so because unbefriended by him? Where is his right? In what section of the divine law? On what page of the sacred volume? In what example of the saints of God, precept of religion, instinct of nature, or amiable affection of the human heart? Is it not, then, I ask, as in the presence of the final judge of all men, is it not an assumed right, arbitrarily exercised to gratify a vindictive passion?

Parents ought to remember, that no person has any assurance either in religion, nature, or observation, when he enters the sacred relation of a married life; that in the event he should become a father, his children will be all according to some pleasing dream he may have entertained of domestic order and filial devotion. He ought rather to consider that his children appear on this stage of action, with a nature morally diseased, and biassed to evil, and, like all others,

A special consideration for parents.

liable to be involved in ruin. And that God requires it at his hand, to do all in his power to counteract the native inclination of his children to vice, and to train them up for virtue and heaven. And let that parent also bear in mind, that under God, those children received their existence from him. Their original disposition, their early impressions, their want of education, and all the elements of their intellectual and moral character from him. And if these are not as nicely adjusted, and as evenly balanced as he could wish, it is not more the misfortune of the parent, than it is of the child. Let him, therefore, be long suffering and gracious; let him cure what he can, pardon what he may, and pity what he cannot cure; if not before, yet on the bed of death, let him show mercy to his child, and not expend his latest energies in anger on his own offspring; or will that father rather, while his own soul is entering tremblingly into the eternal world, looking up to heaven and supplicating God for mercy in the pardon of his own sins, still refuse the exercise of compassion to his own son or daughter. With one hand extended to God imploring help and salvation, will he with the other strike with undying pain, his erring child, after having cast him off in life, while he still exerts his dying strength to blast

Step-fathers and guardians.

him from the tomb? Can any one hope that the judge of all will say in view of such a transaction, "well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been merciful, thou shalt have mercy, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Will he not rather say, "whose blood is that upon thy hands, and where are the souls entrusted to thy care?"

"Fathers provoke not your children to wrath." Consider their ignorance, the acknowledged perverseness of human nature, the possibility that you do not understand the reasons of their conduct, and the still more humiliating probability that you are unintentionally the cause of their error. Provoke them not; bear in mind that they also are rational and immortal beings, and that they have a temperament of their own, and that they can no more be made to think in every thing like yourselves, than they can be invested with your powers of thought and feeling.

Such is the voice of God to fathers, and as a matter of course to all who sustain the relation of head to the family circle, whether denominated father, step-father or guardian. We mention step-father and guardian together, because that they not unfrequently meet in the same person, and often meet honorably; but there are other instances in which the one is only made

Step-fathers and guardians.

the medium of approach to the other; and the man marries the mother, that he may plunder the child. If not, why does he immediately begin to squander their property, nor desist until it is exhausted. O refinement in cruelty! the lion defends the inmates of his own lair, but this monster drives from the fire-side of their own father, the play grounds of their youth, and all the tender associations of childhood, the children of his own wife; and did he not know that these children were a part of his wife, that she gave them birth, watched their infant slumbers, and with all the untold fondness of a mother's soul, smiled whenever they smiled, or mingled her tears with theirs? And does he not know that even now her watchful spirit lingers along their path, numbering their sorrows, and detesting their persecutor? For in the nature of things, no genuine mother can love the oppressor of her child.

Whatever, therefore, may be the particular form of the relation, father, step-father or guardian, the obligation is a plain one; and nature and religion require that it should be most scrupulously complied with; nor can any man hope to live in honor or die in peace, who is guilty of its violation. With these remarks on the prohibition, we turn to consider

The injunction.Children to be brought up.

II. The injunction, "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

1. *Bring them up in the nurture of the Lord.* They are to be brought up, they are not to be left to grow up wild like the vine that wastes its strength in idle wanderings, amidst the underwood of its native thicket. They are to be brought up as plants of immortal value, which, with proper cultivation, will become trees of righteousness, and ultimately pillars in the temple of God. Let them be brought up not as mere things of family pride or parlor decorations, but as rational and immortal beings who are now forming their destiny for everlasting pleasure or pain.

They must be brought up in the nurture of the Lord; that is, in the discipline of the Lord; they are to be placed under rule, and to be made subject to the restraints of reason and religion. The word of God is most clearly a system of intellectual as well as moral restraint. It not only interdicts all communion with whatever is positively wrong, but also with every thing that is of even doubtful character.

The disciplinary regulations of the New Testament are with special reference to the interests of morality and religion. For man was not

Nurture of the Lord.

only made for thought, but for thoughts on heaven, eternity and God. The discipline of the Lord is to direct his mind to the contemplation of these sacred and hallowing subjects, and to sustain him under their overpowering realisation. Taken up as we too generally are with the things of this life, we view, as a matter of vast moment, the means by which a fortune may be amassed, a city regulated or a nation governed. But God has made man for holier and more exalted pursuits than these; pursuits that grasp the interests of both worlds, securing all that is really good, in time or grand in eternity; and hence he has placed him in the midst of means the most ample, and motives the most stirring, to turn the unbroken energies of his soul, to such a course of thought and action, as will ensure rectitude of conduct in this life, and endless blessedness in that to come. And these means and motives belong essentially to the nurture or discipline of the Lord.

But if we would secure to our children all the advantages of gospel discipline, examples, and instruction, we must place them under reasonable restraints; and as on the one hand we are to avoid a criminal harshness, so on the other, we are not to indulge in a doting fondness, perhaps equally pernicious. The proper landmarks be-

Children to be restrained in their amusements.

tween childhood and mature age, are not to be removed, and much less can the natural distinction between parent and child in the family circle, be broken down, without shaking the very foundations of civil order, and throwing society into confusion.

Children are to be restrained in their amusements. Most of the more fashionable resorts, and great centres of pleasure, are little, if any better than whirlpools of vice and corruption; the mere charnel house of virtue and principle. What is the moral character of our Sabbath day excursions, now so much in vogue? What the moral effect of those various exhibitions of human daring, so incessantly lauded in the public prints, and more immediately adapted to impress the juvenile classes of society? Is it too much to say of all these, that so far as virtue and religion are concerned, the effect is evil, "only evil, and that continually." And yet, alas! how many parents professing the religion of Christ, extend to these forms of vice, a regular and almost systematic patronage. They would tremble to see their children sporting on a precipice, or engaged in mirthful pastime on a den of serpents; and yet they encourage them to frolic on eternity's dread brink, unapprehensive; and even afford them the means of amusements in-

Restrained in their reading.

finitely hazardous ; such as of necessity pollute the imagination, inflame the passions, and weaken the force of moral obligations. The parents, it may be, are regularly at their place in the house of God, but where are the children ? Perchance sitting in the seat of the scorner, clapping in the theatre, or engaged in scenes of revelry, banqueting and abominable licentiousness. And who affords the means, who provides the outfits for these daring and dissolute freaks of youthful madness ? Let such parents as feel the point of these interrogatories, answer them to God and their own consciences. Before we dismiss this thought, however painful, we may refer to the fact, that these remarks are, unfortunately, only too appropriate to even some ministers of the Gospel, who exercise no more restraint over their children than if it were not a part of scriptural discipline. Let them call to mind that it was the sin of Eli that he did not restrain the young men. (See 1 Sam. iii, 13.)

Again: *Children are to be restrained in their reading.* A bad book is scarcely less to be avoided than a bad man, for vice is not only communicative by personal intercourse with the wicked, but the moral infection is also received by occasional intercourse with their principles, just as the leprosy was as really contagious in

Restraint in their reading.

the apparel as in the person of the diseased. And let it also be remembered, that it is not only those works confessedly irreligious and vicious in their tendency, that are to be avoided; those high wrought and overcharged descriptions of men and things contained in most works of fiction, to say nothing of their ultimate tendency in most instances to an immoral effect, is reason of sufficient force, why every parent who values the intellectual and moral health of his children, should exclude these things from his family circle.

But is this the policy actually adopted by all or even the greater number of professing parents? What is the more prominent volume on the centre table? Is it not some splendid *Annual*, *Souvenir*, or *Token*, in most instances, with just enough of religious verse and prose to make it not positively bad, or at best but religiously inclined. A thing of mere nominal worth, but of actual disservice to the cause of truth. Instead of these, let parents place before their children books of intrinsic value, such as afford a clear and scriptural view of the duties and privileges of a religious life, and maintaining in all their native vigor, the distinctive features of the parent's creed. Such, at least, is the course most natural to those parents who have

Restrained in their society.

experimental proof of the verity of those things which they believe. The affected liberality of those Christian parents, who refuse to prepossess the minds of their children in behalf of their own religious opinions, arises, it is to be feared, in most instances, more from the want of any well-digested views on this question, or proper sense of its importance, than from an unusual elevation of mind or extent of charity.

Children are to be restrained in their society; and if we are careful to guard the two points already mentioned, we shall find but little difficulty in securing this also. Our reading and our recreation, mostly determine our society. The one affords materials of thought, the other, the outlets of feeling; and hence we may be morally certain, that if we accustom our children to form such habits, as blend useful instruction with innocent amusement, enlightening the understanding and improving their moral sense while opportunity is given to develope their powers of invention, they will form such connections and associations in life as will be honorable to them, and gratifying to ourselves; but if we allow, and much more if we encourage, them to follow those false lights—fictitious writers,

“That lead to bewilder and dazzle to blind,”

they will find a corresponding level and of

A special restraint.

course will take but little interest in any thing, however true, solemn or holy, that is not presented to them in all the gaudy drapery of the most exuberant imagination. If they are pleased, the minister of Christ must appear in the temple of God with the airs and action of some child of fashion. They will listen to the ministers of the gospel, not as ambassadors of Christ, who show unto men the way of salvation, but merely as oratorical declaimers, and will judge of their worth not by the importance of the truths they inculcate, or their personal piety or zeal for God, but by

The well turn'd period and the well tun'd voice,
With all the lesser ornaments of phrase.

Their society will correspond with their sentiments; evil communications will corrupt what may still remain of good manners, and we shall have the deep and unutterable affliction to witness our fondest hopes a miserable desolation.

Here it may be important also to remark that children are not to be initiated into those unhappy jars and collisions, which one family may have with another in the transaction of business or in the affairs of the church. These are topics that they are not prepared to appreciate, nor have they any right to know them. We

Parental indiscretion.

should not arraign and scrutinise the character and official acts of public men in the presence of our children, unless in very special cases. Nor is it wisdom to make them acquainted even with all our own difficulties, before they are prepared by age and experience to render efficient aid either in removing or sustaining them.

But we, says an inconsiderate father, keep no secrets in our family, and proceeds forthwith to detail in the hearing of his children, the rumors of the neighborhood, the difficulties of the church, suspicions of private character or of official conduct, whether founded in justice or gotten up by malignity. What one has surmised, and another has reported, is related in the family circle as probable and is received by the children, as undoubtedly true. In some cases the general character of the church, the particular standing of individuals, the qualifications of church officers, and not unfrequently the talents, piety and usefulness of Christian ministers pass in review before these fireside tribunals. Invidious comparisons are instituted, ungenerous insinuations are indulged in, unkind, if not unmerciful decisions are pronounced on some, and inflated and high wrought encomiums are bestowed on others, with little or no regard to

Its natural results.

truth or righteousness or any thing but their own blinded partialities, and in all this the children are allowed to be prominent actors, under the cover of parental example and authority.

Does any one inquire what are the results of such indiscretion? I answer, precisely what might have been anticipated. The children are led to regard the ministers of Christ, and even the church of God which he purchased with his blood, as subjects, at best of but secondary importance and as having very slender claims on either their veneration or obedience. Their minds have been warped from the truth and they have turned skeptic, secretly questioning the piety of their parents; and, openly denouncing as hypocrisy the religious profession of others, they have turned their backs upon the church of Christ as a system of fraud and imposition, and have scorned the ministers of the Lord Jesus, as the interested agents of the institution. This we suppose to be one of the chief reasons, why in so many instances the children of religious parents are seen standing in the way of sinners, if not sitting in the seat of the scorner. We should therefore bring up our children in the nurture or discipline of the Lord; Let them be subject to the restraints of reason and religion.

Tendency of discipline.

These restraints are, in every way, congenial with our nature; they do no violence to the powers of genius, nor cramp the energies of invention; they do not overburden the memory nor disable the moral sense; they rather assign to every power in the human constitution its appropriate division of labor, and sustain them in the exercise of their natural functions. They call off the mind from all that is merely earthly and sensual, and raise it to the most pure and elevated themes of contemplation. They purify the fountains of thought and feeling, and increase the means and strengthen the power of motive to improvement, because they open to the mind, the boundless future, and inspire the soul with exultation in hope of immortality. Under the action of this discipline, reason rises to her proper element, and enters upon scenes of undecaying beauty. Here it is permitted to drink freely from the river of life, and here while its energies are strengthened by exercise, and emboldened by adventure, they are purified by prayer. And thus the whole man stands forth to the admiration of angels, in all the majesty of a thinking being, and little less than a spirit of the skies. But,

2. *We are to bring them up in the admonition of the Lord; that is, in the instruction or*

Children to be brought up in the admonition of the Lord.

doctrine of the Lord. In general we may remark, that children should be brought up to some useful end. If we would have them respected, we must endeavor to render them useful members of society; valuable not so much for what they have as for what they do. They should be brought up to habits of industry and carefulness.

Parents should avoid as a most dangerous error, that silly pride that refuses their children a practical knowledge of some useful business, merely because they have a fortune to bestow upon them. The instances are not rare in which men have died in poverty, simply because their parents left them rich; while others have honorably attained to affluence and distinction in the world, who did not enjoy these advantages. Whatever, therefore, may be the favors parents may have it in their power to bestow on their children, they should never, by any means, do away the necessity of personal exertion, for even exercise gives character, and industry is favorable both to wealth and religion.

But we are to bear in mind, that whatever comfort or decoration, it may be proper or necessary to provide for our children in the present life, and whatever instruction, it may be necessary to confer, to render them useful members

They are to be subjects of religious instruction.

of civil society, it is the sole and the higher interests of the future world that claim our chief attention. If we can place them on a level with the more fortunate of their associates, or give them an outfit in the world, it may be well; but even then we shall have accomplished but little in securing the great end of their being, and in preparing them for the vision of God, and the society of angels. They *must* be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

1. *They are to be the subjects of religious instruction.*—From the revealed will of God, as the great reservoir of religious truth and moral rule, we are to bring those refreshing streams of spiritual health, that shall give fertility and loveliness to the otherwise arid wastes of the human mind. The word of God is to form the great centre of all their intellectual operations, as well as the controlling power of their whole lives. To this their minds are to be directed as a sure and unerring guide, amidst the darkness and confusion of this life—a light that sheds its cheering rays on all the obscurities of our earthly pilgrimage, and also brightens with its radiance the valley of death. (See Psa. xxiii, 24.)

They are to be brought up in the *knowledge* of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent to be the Saviour of the world. Teach

Teach them both the theory and practice of religion.

them to read the Scriptures of truth, and to read them as the words of the living God. Read them with and to them, and encourage those artless but pertinent inquiries youth is wont to institute, by the affectionate, easy, and familiar illustrations of whatever may be obscure or difficult to their understanding. And thus lead them on from the mere elements of Christian doctrine, to things more difficult to be understood. "So shall they become wise unto salvation, and mighty in the Scriptures of truth."

The *practical* nature of religion must be prominently exhibited, and deeply impressed on their minds. They must be given to feel the obligation they are under to venerate the institutions of the Most High. Teach them to keep the Sabbath of the Lord, not merely as a day of relaxation from business or of friendly intercourse with their relations; and least of all as a day of festivity and mirth. Teach them to keep it holy unto the Lord their God. Read to them the decalogue, show its claims, the consequences of its violation. Explain the solemn nature of an oath, or any appeal to God. The heinousness of hypocrisy and falsehood; of envy and slander, injustice and oppression. Show them the reasons of obedience to the civil ruler, and what it is that constitutes a good citizen. Cause

The necessity of experience.

them to venerate the house of God, his worship, and his ministers; and never allow them to speak lightly of their seniors in age or in office. Defend them against the impression that the house of God is merely a place of fashionable resort, and the Sabbath a day of more than ordinary vanity, pride, and display. Teach them that God tries the hearts of men, and that it is the moral condition of the heart which renders us pleasing or displeasing, in his sight. That our true wisdom and happiness is to understand and perform our duty.

But even all this will fail to secure the end proposed, unless we bring our children to *experience the renewing power of divine grace*. The foundations of evangelical morality are laid not in intellectual improvements, but in spiritual regeneration, in the destruction of the carnal mind. "We cannot hope to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. The tree must be made good." Matt. vii, 16, 17. Education may develop and discipline the mind, society polish their manners, and reading and study enrich them with all that is valuable in literature and science. But still the corrupt fountain will send forth its putrid streams, and the untamed passions of the heart, like unclean birds of evil omen, will ever and anon, fly abroad, an alarm-

Parents are to instruct their children.

ing presage of prodigality and crime. And as it is only by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit of God, that these evil principles and propensities of our nature, can be subdued and destroyed, and that the affections can be directed to their proper object, and that conscience can be made to execute the trust of an ever watchful sentinel over the immortal interests of man; so our children should be taught to seek it of God in all the earnestness of prayer and simplicity of faith. We should press home upon their hearts the simple but momentous truth, "Ye must be born again." Thus are we to bring them up in the *nurture* of the Lord.

2. *This instruction is to be given by parents;* "and ye fathers bring your children," &c. Nothing but incapacity can relieve parents from this obligation; for whatever forms of public instruction it may have pleased God to institute for the benefit of mankind generally, he has uniformly insisted on the faithful discharge of this duty, as one of paramount importance. It formed one of the leading excellencies in the character of Abraham, "That he would command his children and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment." (Gen. xviii, 19.) And this principle was so incorporated with the institutions of the Jewish

They should do it cheerfully.

Church, as to be one of its prominent glories. (See Deut. vi, 6, 7.) “And the words that I command thee, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way.”— (See also Psa. lxxviii, 3. 8.)

Parents should give this instruction *cheerfully*, and never think the time uselessly expended, that is appropriated to the moral, mental and religious cultivation of their children. Better neglect all beside than these, for ultimately children are every thing to their parents. (Psa. cxxvii.) “Children are an heritage of the Lord; as arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth,” &c. It is a poor business to attend to the accumulation of a fortune for our children, and neglect their education. It is as if a man would gather straws, and scatter precious stones. Let parents but cultivate the minds and morals of their children, and in a great majority of cases, they will reap a hundred fold. (See Prov. xxii, 6.) “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he *will not* depart from it.” In the morning let them plant the seeds of knowledge, and in the evening not withhold their hand, seeing they know not whether shall prosper, either this or

It should be done affectionately and consistently.

that, or whether they both shall be alike good. Eccles. xi, 6.

This instruction should be given *affectionately*. Sympathy and condescension are attributes of character essential to every teacher, and especially to a parent. Things are to be brought down to the capacities of children, and should frequently be sanctified with prayer. Things spiritual can be explained by reference to things natural, and their minds may, by an easy and impressive transition be led from the contemplation of this world to that which is to come. On all your well meant efforts, ask the special blessing of God, so shall your sons grow up as olive plants round about your table, and your daughters be as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace. Psa. cxliv, 12.

This instruction is to be given *consistently*.
✕ Our children are to understand that it is a subject of immense moment; that the cultivation of the mind, the formation of correct habits, acting from proper principles to worthy ends are not things of secondary import. But that these are the very basis of all that is valuable in human nature. And, hence, their minds are to be held to some point, and they are to be urged forward as they can bear, in the prosecution of some enterprise, that can be turned to good account,

Enforced by authority and example.

either as matter of intellectual embellishment or practical utility.

This instruction is to be enforced by *authority*. Parents are to command, and children are required to obey, for such is the will of God. "Children obey your parents in the Lord." Eph. vi, 1. Parents are not merely to advise their children, they must do their utmost to enforce their regulations. (See Prov. xxix, 15.) "The rod and reproof give wisdom." Verse xvii. "Correct thy son and he shall give thee rest, yea, he shall give delight to thy soul." Such is the appointment of God, the voice of reason and of experience.

This instruction is to be enforced by *example*. ✓
If parents are kind and affectionate, ready to assist and serve each other; if they are industrious, economical, neat in person and attentive to business, faithful to meet their engagements, and generous to relieve the distressed, it is morally impossible that the influence of their example should be entirely lost on their children. The great fault with most parents in this particular is, that they do not make their example sufficiently prominent. Children love something strongly marked: something clear and unequivocal: and because this is not found as generally as it ought to be, religious example has not its

Conclusion.

proper influence upon them. Therefore, let your light so shine before your children, that they seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven. Mat. v, 16. But to conclude these reflections, we may advert,

1. *To the pernicious consequences which most generally attend the violation of the instructions contained in the text.* It has become almost an adage, that cruel parents have vicious children; and although not true in every case, it is perfectly reasonable that it should be. For if children behold their natural guardians and protectors not only indifferent to their interests, but also arbitrary, cruel and oppressive, how can it be otherwise, than that they should regard their own home as a place of punishment, and leave it for an asylum among strangers? Or abandon themselves to the dominion of passion, of prejudice and crime? Similar results will attend a form of domestic government too lax in its regulations or inefficiently administered. For the worst of despotism is when every one is permitted to do as seemeth right in his own eyes.

Provoke not your children to wrath; give them a wholesome example, reasonable discipline, the means and opportunity of improvement, as far as is in your power; and as you require the homage of their affections, let them

Conclusion.

have the light of your countenance. Reciprocate their confidence, and increase the ardor of their affection, by manifesting the sincerity and activity of your own. Never cast your children carelessly upon the world, to encounter and contend with its adverse scenes unsustained by your counsel or co-operation. No father should ever say, "I had no education, no help, no opportunities, and I have got on in the world; my children are no better than I, let them do as I have done before them." To say that such language is *inexcusable*, is not enough, it is *grossly unnatural*. Parents should rather give their children all the character they can, whether it rest on property, education, or moral worth. And in most cases where this is done, if children are not wise, they will be virtuous; if they are not great, they will be good. And in any event, the parents will be clear before God, having done their duty in this thing.

Again, avoid all unseemly epithets, institute no unkind and mortifying comparisons, between your own children and those of other persons. Remember they are not the less yours, because their capabilities are slender. Therefore do not venture thus to despise the work of God, and to treat with indifference them to whom you should extend the greater sympathy. Never forget that

Conclusion.

whatever may be the grade of mind allotted your children, they are placed by the appointment of God, under your protection, and that he has made it your duty to watch over, uphold, and educate them according to your ability, and that for this he holds you responsible to his bar.

2. We refer, finally, *to the advantages that will, in most instances, crown the pious care of parents in this department of their duty.* Thus they strengthen their authority, by improving the principles, and increasing the affection of their children. For every impression made by their kindness or neglect, strikes in upon the soul, and lasts forever. And thus they also afford their children the readiest passport to respectability in the world. They throw around them the most effectual preventives to vice, and place before them the most active incentives to virtue, and heighten the pleasing probability, that at last they and their children, will meet together in the kingdom of God.

O how transporting the thought, that you and yours, sons and daughters, shall all, at an approaching period, and that not remote, meet together never to be separated again. And there to mature in heaven those sentiments and affections of kindness and piety, planted and cultivated with so much solicitude at your own fireside.

Conclusion.

Let this cheer and encourage you, ye fathers, as you bend your course heavenward, leading on in the van of your domestic charge. Say, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Encourage them with your examples, your blessings, and your prayers, so shall they be your joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Then thou shalt say, "Lord, here am I and the children that thou hast given me," and He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." May it be even so. Amen, and Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

Eph. vi. 1, 2. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy Father and Mother, (which is the first commandment with promise.)"

It may be regarded as one of the peculiar excellencies of the Christian religion, that it is wisely adapted to the present very imperfect and complicated state of human society, being neither too limited in its instructions, nor deficient in motive, to give them effect. It abounds with promises exceeding great and precious; almost endless in their variety, and unequivocal in their forms of expression, promises in every way calculated to cheer and invigorate the heart of the pilgrim, in this world of vicissitudes and afflictions. It also takes into view the various relations that exist among men, together with the obligations they originate, and their appropriate duties. It defines the nature, and specifies the limits of authority, as well as of obedience, and upholds the one and enforces the other, by sanctions of the highest import, and greatest power that we can comprehend.

The nature and extent of the command.

The word of God not only recognises and guards the high prerogatives of the civil ruler enjoining on every disciple, "To render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, as truly as unto God the things that are God's." Matt. xxii, 21. But it also descends into the private circle of the humblest family, and inculcates on each of its members those duties which in the nature of things, are essential to their individual or collective prosperity. The husband, the wife, the parent, the child, the master, the servant, are all addressed in turn; and their respective duties are distinctly stated, and emphatically enjoined with all the authority of a revelation from God. In the two preceding discourses, we have considered those duties in their relation to persons as heads of families, either simply as man and wife, or with the additional responsibility of parents. We now notice another branch of our subject, perhaps not less important than either of those previously considered. *The duty of children to their parents.* "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

I. Let us explain the *nature* and *extent* of this command.—Obey your parents in the Lord.

The nature of the obedience here enjoined, is such as to render this a very grave inquiry and

Nature of the Command.

to invest it with peculiar claims on our attention, because that its proper observance is essentially connected with every thing vitally important to man, regarded either as a creature of civil, social or religious habits; and hence is universally regarded as a fundamental principle of good government; while its opposite is always the attendant of atheism in religion, and insubordination, anarchy and rebellion in the state. That disobedience to parents is really a crime of fearful magnitude, cursing as deeply in its natural tendencies and providential visitations, the unnatural child, as it afflicts the heart-riven parent, will not be disputed by any one who understands the philosophy of his own nature, or attends to the testimony of the past, and the mysterious operations of the Almighty in the administration of his righteous providence.

When the apostle would describe the corruption attendant on the general falling away, or apostacy which would take place in the last days, he places high and prominent in the list of enormities, which should then abound, *disobedience to parents*. 2 Tim. iii, 1—2. Such also is the view presented of this subject in the Old Testament. Ezk. xxiii, 7. See also Mal. iv, 5—6. “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dread-

Comprehends submission.

ful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." But to proceed with the explanation of this duty—we may observe that it comprehends:

1. *Submission to parental authority and rule.* That parents are manifestly the divinely appointed guardians and rulers of their children, and that they have within certain limits, rights and authority, superior to all other persons, are questions of indisputable certainty. Submission, therefore, to their will on the part of their children, is only to abide by an appointment of God, in itself most obvious, and in its bearings on the interests of society in every conceivable point of light, vitally interesting. The instinctive promptness with which children look to their parents for protection and support, and the common understanding that parents are under obligations to afford them protection, is a tacit acknowledgment of their right to govern and impose on their children, the obligation of submission to their authority. This, indeed, is due as an expression of gratitude for benefits received, and as a grateful tribute of respect to their divinely appointed superiors, under whose watchful care and tenderness they have been fed, clothed and

Disobedient children bad citizens.

protected. Children obey your parents, submit to their authority, do not dare to oppose or violate their laws or instructions when they are not at variance with the revealed will of God. "Therefore, my son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother, for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head and as chains about thy neck." Prov. i, 8—9.

There are instances, however, in which even this low degree of filial piety is not found, and in which the children, as if abandoned to evil or born without the ordinary instincts of humanity, rise up in open rebellion against their parents, and censure without scruple, and renounce without shame, the instructions of their wisdom and the appointments of their authority. "This is a generation that in heart curseth their father and doth not bless their mother." Prov. xxx, 11. Surely such a child is not only one of the heaviest afflictions that can burden a parent's heart, but also one of the darkest reproaches of human nature, and it will be found as a general rule, that persons of this class form the most insubordinate and troublesome members of *civil* society. Their disobedience and rebellion at home is but the prelude to more public transactions of infamy and recklessness abroad, for

Various reasons for submission.

when children throw off the restraints of family government, they precipitate themselves as from a precipice, into a depth of temptation, irreligion and crime, from which there is no return but that of the contrite prodigal. Luke xv, 17—21. The only adequate basis of public order, is private virtue, and the strongest guarantee of obedience to civil rule, is submission to parental authority; for the child who rebels against his parents will also rebel against his God and all subordinate forms of authority. Hence we read, “Ye shall fear every man his father and his mother and keep my Sabbaths, I am the Lord your God.” Lev. xix, 3.

Submit to their restraints, and as you value a good conscience, while you are in their family abide by their regulations; if they command, obey; if they rebuke, hear with patience and submission; for “he is a fool that despiseth his father’s instruction; but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.” Prov. xv, 5.

If you are not clad as fine nor urged forward in society as fast as some of your associates, or perhaps your kindred, bear in mind that it may not be in the power of your parents to afford it. If they refuse the price of a dress, or the outfit and means for an excursion of pleasure and fashion, it may be in order to meet some obliga-

This command enjoins affection.

tion in business, or to secure the means of education, if not for yourself, yet for some of the younger members of the family; and be assured that if at present you are unable to appreciate their motives, you most certainly will be hereafter, especially if ever in the providence of God you become a parent. "Therefore, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother, bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck; when thou goest, it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou wakest it shall talk with thee." Prov. vi, 20—22.

2. *Another particular embraced in this command, is affection or love.* The submission of a child is not to be like that of a slave, or of a person under wrath or condemnation, who bows to the yoke reluctantly, and with a secret abhorrence of the power that receives his submission; it is rather to be the free-will offering of affection, the tribute of love in the strictest sense of that word. We do not intend to intimate that filial affection is, or in the nature of things can be, equal to parental love, because it has not the same offices to perform, nor the same privations to endure; and is, therefore, not armed with the same vigor of principle, untiring fortitude, and patient endurance; but yet it has all that is ami-

Inferior to parental affection.

able or generous in friendship, that is magnanimous in patriotism, and much that is sacred in religion.

The correctness of this sentiment, we imagine, will be readily recognised and admitted by every considerate parent. In the one this affection is a principle of defence and protection; in the other of artless confidence and implicit submission. The affection of a parent is full of care and contrivance—it is now buoyant with hope, and anon depressed with fear; it marks every little variation of health, and indication of genius, and all the assembling elements of character which, meeting in his child, give presage of future good or evil. In a child, it is a principle regulated in its action to a great extent by considerations of self-interest, and is, therefore, irregular in its motion, and uncertain in its fruits. Parental affection is a master principle, absorbing the entire soul; it dictates the measures of business abroad, and superintends all the regulations of home. If a parent buy or sell, mourn or rejoice, encounter perils by land or by sea, it is, in most cases, from considerations involving the interest of his children.

In further illustration of the superiority of parental tenderness to filial affection, we may remark, that David, as a son, has consecrated no

Filial love a growing principle.

hymn to preserve the memory of his own venerable father, and thus to enlighten and edify posterity by the example of his filial piety. But as a father he has spoken the undisguised feelings of every pious parent, in lamenting the death of his own ungrateful and rebellious son. "O my son, Absalom! my son, my son, Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

But still, filial affection is one of the most active elements in the juvenile character of man; and in all persons of correct principles and education, though not so ardent in its expression, becomes more prompt and cheerful in its service, with increase of years, and more especially where children themselves have become parents. If ever this affection is obliterated from the human breast, it is not until vice has taken the entire possession of the child, or the protection of the parent has been unnaturally withheld, and their negligence or unkindness has constituted their children orphans, while their parents were yet alive. But even then, where this is the case, the tribute of affection still is due. A parent is still an object of love and veneration, either in renown or ruin. "Children love your parents;" reason and religion dictate that the most charitable construction should be placed on all their actions,

Children to reverence their parents.

however unfortunate in business, or irregular in conduct, for by the appointment of heaven even their very faults are sacred. (See Gen. ix, 20, 22.) Let it then be understood, that the obedience here enjoined implies submission and affection; and

3. *Reverence.* In Exodus, xx, 12, we are commanded, "Honor thy father and thy mother;" and again, in Lev. xix, 3, "Ye shall fear every man his father and his mother." Children are, therefore, to have upon their minds an humbling sense of their inferiority to their parents, and are to reverence them as their natural and divinely appointed superiors. If it is reasonable and just to treat with reverence our civil rulers or teachers, and persons more advanced in age than ourselves, generally, how much more reasonable and just is it to venerate our parents, from whom, under God, we receive our being. Children are, therefore, never to usurp the place of parents in the domestic government, nor crowd them out of conversation in the family circle, nor exercise their wit in impertinent retorts at the fire-side. They are not to amuse themselves with what may be awkward, or expose what may be weak in their minds or manners. But they are to remember, that although their parents may not be great, and what is more to be

Children are to serve their parents.

regretted, may not be good, yet they are to them what no other persons can be, and they have claims high and holy, to the most affectionate veneration.

There are cases, however, in which the child will assume, even in the presence of their parents, all the ferocity of a madman, or the antics of a buffoon, and even glory in his shame, as if to experiment upon their forbearance or good-nature. In vain the mother weeps, and the father remonstrates, "the foolish son is a grief to the one, and a bitterness to the other." Prov. xvii, 25. He turns sneeringly from what is denominated the antiquated manners of his parents, and prides himself in being a person of superior spirit and fashion, because he can hold in disdain the circle of their society. In these cases of filial insubordination and rebellion, parent and child change places; the former pleads, but the other raves, and nestling in his bosom passions as venomous as adders, and cruel as the poison of asps, rushes on to infamy and ruin; an awful demonstration, that "he that begetteth a fool, doth it to his sorrow; and that the father of a fool hath no joy." Prov. xvii, 21.

4. *Another particular embraced in this command, is service.* Submission to rule, affection, and veneration, are not, by any means, all that

Parents transfer their rights.

children are to render to their parents. The command is, "Children, obey your parents." They certainly have the first and strongest claim at your hands. We now speak more particularly of service rendered during the time that children remain with their parents, and such as may be necessary to assist or support them. This may be humiliating, it may be the veriest drudgery, and impose a great abridgment of personal comfort, but still it is a duty that God has clearly enjoined upon man, nor can it be neglected without violence to our own nature, and exposure to His displeasure. Therefore do the will of your parents cheerfully, and do it as unto God, knowing that whatsoever good a man does, of the Lord shall he receive his reward.

There are instances in which parents find it necessary or convenient to exercise a right vested in them by nature, and recognised by law, of transferring the time and service of their children to other persons, for a given period; and in that event, whether the transfer be made for the benefit of the parent or child, the latter certainly does not sustain the same relation to the family as previously, for the obvious reason, that he is placed under the regulations of another domestic government. All the duties, therefore, which were previously expected at his hands, cannot

The command enjoins assistance.

now, in justice, be exacted; yet he does sustain the relation of a child to his parents, and therefore the service which is relinquished, and cannot be claimed, on the ground of law, is still rendered cheerfully under the impulse of affection, so far as is practicable, unless there be something reprehensible in the parent, or abandoned in the child to prevent it. Admitting this view of the subject to be correct, what is the estimation in which we are to hold the child, who pilfers and purloins his parent's substance for purposes of dissipation, folly, and crime? "He" saith the word of God, "who robbeth his father or his mother, and saith it is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer." Prov. xxviii, 24. He has in his bosom the elements of every low and sordid wickedness; too indolent to labor, too proud to be thought poor, and too mean in spirit to encounter the dangers of an open robber, he meanly and tamely steals the hard earnings of a father's labor, and the little savings of a mother's care.

5. *The command before us comprehends assistance: honor or obey your parents;* that is, assist them. By this expression we mean such aid as it may be in the power of children to afford their parents, after they have come to years, and are separated from them into distinct

The command enjoins assistance.

family organisations of their own. It sometimes occurs, in the providence of God, that a period turns up in life in which parents need the assistance of their children, as much as ever the children required the attention of their parents; and if there is any principle clearly revealed in the oracles of God or positively commanded by the voice of nature, it is the duty of rendering that assistance, whether it imply food, apparel or home. And as there certainly is no duty more obviously binding on children than this, so there is none in which a virtuous mind can realise a richer or more lasting satisfaction. The child who is thus permitted to shelter, console, or provide for an aged parent, and requite with personal service the attention received in infancy, is happy beyond expression. And yet the duty of rendering such assistance and the pleasure attending the performance of this duty is sometimes rendered impracticable, if not by the poverty of the child, yet by the imprudence or criminal irregularities of the parent. In the former case there certainly cannot be the guilt of a wilful violation of the Divine Law; in the latter, there is manifestly the gloom of an overwhelming misfortune—a misfortune which but very few can appreciate, because that in the merciful

Not less a duty than a privilege.

providence of God, few are called to taste this cup of almost unearthly bitterness. Yet such instances do occur, and unhappily, like many other of the deeper afflictions of human nature, are least soothed or sustained by its sympathies.

But whatever may be the principles or habits of parents, though a woman forget her sucking child, and refuse to have compassion on the son of her womb, Isa. lix, 15; "Yea, though both father and mother forsake them," Psal. xxvii, 10; still it is the appointment of God, so far as is practicable, that parents should receive honor from their children. The will of the Most High is not more explicitly made known in relation to the Sabbath, to murder, theft, or falsehood, than in relation to this question. Honor thy father and mother is one of the most prominent points in the decalogue, and the honor or obedience there enjoined, and which parents are to receive from their children, embraces the several particulars already explained. And these, it would seem to us, comprehend all that is essential to complete their duty, that either instinct would prompt or reason require. Such is the nature of the duty enjoined in the text. Children obey your parents in the Lord, submit

Extent of this duty.

to their regulations; do it reverently, affectionately, do it in all things, for this is well pleasing to God. The next point to be noticed is,

2. *The extent of this duty.* Obey your parents *in the Lord*. This obedience is to be in subordination to the will of God, for the authority of our parents can never release us from the obligations we are under to the Almighty. Sacred as is the relation we sustain to them, it is vastly inferior to that we hold to our Creator, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. If, therefore, we should in any case be commanded by them to do what God has forbidden, or to leave undone what he has commanded us to do, we are not only free from obligation to obey, but our responsibility to God demands at our hands a prompt but respectful refusal. The general command, in the text, obey your parents *in the Lord*, is equivalent to a particular prohibition in all such cases.

The authority of parents does no more empower them to compel their children to receive a false religion, than to adopt a lax system of morals. They can no more impose an obligation to receive an erroneous creed, than they can to reject all creeds; for it is not in the number of those rights, with which it has pleased God to invest parents, that they should have

Parents in the place of God.

power to bind the consciences of their children, or to prescribe to them the terms of eternal life. It is true that they are to superintend and secure the education of their children, but they are to bring them up not according to their own prejudices, or partialities, but in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If children are responsible to God for their own actions; if they will not be allowed to plead at the bar of God in extenuation, or justification of any sin, that their parents commanded it, and if it be a settled principle in the moral government of God; that no one shall be permitted to say, the parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge, but that every man shall bear his own iniquity;" (Ezk. xviii, 1—4,) then certainly the case is too plain for controversy, that children are not to violate any precept of the Almighty, nor sacrifice their conscience to please any one, not even a parent. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Matt. x, 37.

Children are to obey their parents in the Lord; that is, in the place of God, after our Creator. Parents sustain to their children the nearest relation of any living being. As the civil magistrate is God's representative in the commonwealth, appointed by him to be a terror to evil doers and

Children to obey in the fear of God.

a praise to them that do well, Rom. xiii, 1—4; and as the ministers of Christ are his ambassadors in the church, to whom is committed the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Cor. v, 19—20; so, parents in the domestic circle are his representatives to their children. Their commands, therefore, are to be scrupulously received and obeyed as the will of God, in relation to their children where they do not contravene some express revelation of the Most High. They should, therefore, obey their parents in the spirit of piety. This obedience is not only to be rendered as an act of duty to the parent, but also of devotion to God, and thus to blend in the same deed, acceptable service to their greatest benefactors on earth, and their Almighty preserver in heaven.

Children should obey their parents in the fear of God. They are to remember that to violate the reasonable commands and instructions of their parents, is to sin against their Creator; and that He resents as one of the worst forms of human depravity filial insubordination, as naturally engendering a fitness for deeds of the grossest folly and most daring impiety. Hence it was, that God guarded that part of the Jewish economy enjoining obedience to parents with those high and tremendous sanctions;

Children should obey for the glory of God.

neither idolatry, nor blasphemy, nor any other crime is more heavily denounced, or more severely punished under the law than disobedience to parents. Exod. xxi, 15. "And he that smiteth his father or his mother, shall be surely put to death." We do not imagine that the *ceremonial law*, as such, is still binding on men, but most certainly the *moral law* unincumbered with the peculiarities of the Levitical dispensation is as fully enforced now on all men as it was before, or at any time during the continuance of the Jewish institute. The fact to which we have referred, therefore, though not strictly appropriate to us as a motive in the same sense as to the Jews, does answer that purpose in a higher sense, and one more congenial with the greater spirituality of our religion and perfection of the revelation we have received from God. For thus we are given to see the primary relation in which this principle stands to the whole economy of religion, and how deeply it enters into the moral arrangements of the divine government, and how most sacredly it is regarded by the great Father of the spirits of all flesh, the Creator of angels and men.

Children should obey their parents for the glory of God. They are to respect their religious opinions and practices; and if not at

Arguments that enforce this duty. As reasons of nature.

variance with the word of God, they should conform to their wishes in this particular. If you have the happiness to have religious parents, regard it as one of the greatest favors that God bestows on men. Thankfully receive their instructions and imitate their pious example; blush at the idea of leaving them for a more fashionable religion, one more congenial with the vitiated taste of the world, or that promises an easier way to heaven. Rather adopt the resolution and example of pious Ruth, who said, "Entreat me not to leave thee nor to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Ruth i, 16. Obey them for the Lord's sake, "knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. Eph. vi, 8.

II. The reasons or argument that enforce this precept. These we shall consider:

1. *As reasons of nature.* Our first argument is taken from the nature of the case, it is a dictate of reason that children should obey their parents, a principle deeply implanted in the moral constitution of man, and when it is not suppressed by the force of bad example, nor neutralised by

Reasons of Nature.

the indulgence of vicious passions, perhaps more powerful in its influence over the human mind than most others. The reasonableness of this duty is so perfectly obvious, that simply to name it ought to be sufficient to ensure obedience, because it is one inculcated by the ordinary instincts of our nature, and enforced by recollections interwoven with the experience of every day. Its appearance in the decalogue, is, therefore, although an expression of wisdom and goodness on the part of our Maker, a humiliating allusion to the perverted condition of our fallen nature, which hesitates to move one step in the path of duty, unless urged by the force of penal law.

An elderly person, male or female, hoary with age, and feeble with the weight of years, leaning on his or her staff, and trembling to the tomb, is one of the most interesting exhibitions of human nature. The associations and moral influence attending which, are vastly more pure and salutary than those that accompany a survey of man in his greenness or his glory. But an aged parent, supported by the arm of a devoted child, affords an exemplification of principle and character still more interesting and affecting. There is an indefinable pleasure in the contemplation of such an association of infirmity and vigor, of age and youth, of parent and child, upon which

A common principle of our nature.

the mind loves to linger, because that it is almost unavoidably made better by the scene, and yet vastly superior are the pleasures of watching the declining years, and soothing the latest sorrows of an affectionate parent.

Those laws, which govern the human mind, inspire the weary traveller with, at least, a momentary affection for the solitary rock beneath whose shelving brow, he found a timely shelter from the scorching sun or the howling tempest. The shipwrecked mariner regards with grateful emotion, the plank or spar on which he floated, to even an inhospitable shore; and these affections of the human mind, are not only viewed as innocent, but also as amiable, as honorable to their possessor, and as an advantage to such as may be associated with them in life.

And, surely then, we only act according to the voice of nature, in rendering to our parents that submission and affection, veneration and obedience, enjoined in the text. The recollection of a father's care, and of a mother's fears and sufferings, tears and tenderness, should never be effaced from the mind; and this, we imagine, is the case universally, where men are true to nature. Age may bring its long train of infirmities; disease may wither what even age has spared, and disappointment shed the gloom of

Filial piety essential to a healthy state of the moral powers.

ruined hopes and blasted expectations, over the mere remains of what was once symmetry of form, and gracefulness of motion. But still, the muscle does not cleave with greater tenacity to the bone, nor animated nature to life itself, than the affection of a child to its parent, where no vicious principle, nor unfortunate circumstance interposes to prevent it.

As it is, therefore, a principle implanted in our nature by the hand of God, to obey our parents, unless this rule of conduct, this indication of the Divine will be complied with, it will follow, that our whole moral constitution will be impaired, and its entire action will become feeble, unhealthy, and irregular. It certainly will not be denied that there are particular instincts in our nature, as unequivocal in their forms of expression, and as imperative in their authority, as any revealed or special law, but there is none more truly sacred, and of more generally acknowledged power, than the one under consideration. "Children obey your parents," is the voice of nature; this is nature's universal law. The leaf does not leave its native bough until separated by violence or disease; nor does the ripe fruit descend from the stem that nourished it, until it falls to perish; so also the filial stream maintains its connection with the parent source, however humble the vale,

Another reason.One of law.

or rugged the mountain of its nativity, through all its distant and devious wanderings. Conform to this general rule; and while the sunshine of prosperity gilds your prospects, or the storms of an adverse Providence howl round your path, cleave to the father who protected your infancy, and to the mother whose sympathetic bosom nourished your tender form.

2. *Our second reason is one of law.* It has pleased God to give the principle a prominent place in his moral code. This is a command, the first commandment with promise. The relation in which it stands to the other branches of the decalogue, imply, at least, that it is enforced by the same truly awful penalties which give their sanction to the several parts of that Divine Law. If, therefore, disobedience to parents is not so great an offence as blasphemy or idolatry, it is, nevertheless, a sin against the same authority, and a violation of the same general rule: for He who said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," Exod. xx, 7, also said, "Honor thy father and thy mother." Exod. xx, 12.

The import of this rule, is readily perceived by reference to the manner in which it was applied by those persons, to whom it was at first given; and here it will be seen to have had a

Import of this rule.

very broad and binding relation to the juvenile population. It required of children reverence for their parents. Deut. xxvii, 16. "Cursed be he that sitteth light by his father or his mother, and all the people shall say, Amen." And if any man had a stubborn rebellious son, which would not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, the law provided that under certain regulations, he should be "stoned to death." Deut. xxi, 18, 21. It required of children that they should receive and honor the instructions of their parents. Prov. i, 1. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

Such was the manner in which this law was, at first, understood and administered; and whatever there may be of apparent severity in the regulation, it was the mildest form of law on this subject, then extant among men. And, although there may be some difference in the mode of administering this law, regarded as a rule of moral conduct, in periods of time remote from each other, yet the great principles to be maintained, are, essentially, the same in all ages, and therefore a conformity to the rule itself, is now, and must ever be, as much a matter of Divine requirement, as when at first the Almighty wrote it on the tablet of the human heart, or at a later

Importance of maintaining this principle.

period published it amidst thunder and fire, on tables of stone.

The importance of maintaining this principle of obedience to parents, in order to secure the ends of good government, is a reason of sufficient magnitude to secure for it the prominent place it occupies in the moral appointments of heaven. Because it is manifestly impossible to afford any sufficient guarantee of obedience to the civil rulers of the land, or the more sacred institutions of religion, where the authority of parents is disregarded, and this commandment is set at nought. And here it is further to be observed and kept in mind, that the law of God contained in the Holy Scriptures, is one complete whole. The duties of religion are not presented to man as abstract and independent principles, either of which may be received or rejected without prejudice to the others, but as having a natural affinity and sympathy for each other, so that all are received or rejected together. Hence says the Apostle, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." Jam. ii, 10, 11. It is, therefore, a glaring absurdity to suppose that zeal in the performance of some duties, will atone for the total or partial omission of others equally of Divine appointment. 'The extravagance is still

A third reason is one of example.

greater if we hope by ardor in maintaining the institutions of men, to exonerate ourselves from observing the commandments of God. This, however, was the great error of the Jews, so pointedly rebuked by our Lord. Matt. xv. 1—6.

This, then, is our second reason for the duty under consideration. It is commanded in the law of God; and no obedience to that law is, or in the nature of things can be, acceptable to its author which does not embrace this principle. The reasonableness of this view of the subject will readily appear, when we recur to the fact, that this principle lies at the foundation of all civil order and rational or scriptural piety. 1 Tim. v, 4—8.

3. *Our third reason is one of precedent or example.* The example of such as have been distinguished either for their attention to, or their habitual neglect of this important duty—

First, we may advert to a few prominent cases in sacred history, of persons who have manifested a becoming attention to this branch of moral duty; it entered deeply into their feelings, and was honorably conspicuous in their lives.

There is the history of Shem and Japhet, than which a more deeply affecting expression of filial love and veneration can scarcely be con-

Case of Joseph.The Rechabites.

ceived. They knew, and still endeavored not to know, and even to hide from themselves, the folly of their incautious parent; they would not see lest they should be witnesses of his crime.

There is the case of Joseph, who when he was raised to affluence and power in Egypt, did not forget the sheep-cotes of Hebron, and the tender expressions of parental kindness he there received; but exerted himself to the utmost of his ability for the relief and comfort of his father's house. And certainly he never appeared to as much advantage even when riding in princely grandeur, and only second to Pharaoh, as he did when weeping on the neck of his venerable father. Gen. xlv, 29—30.

We have another interesting case in the descendants of Jonadab the son of Rechab, Jer. xxxv, 8. "Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab, your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me forever." Verse 18—19.

On all these cases the special blessing of Almighty God descended; he was particularly mindful of them both in their temporal and spiritual interests. And he has embalmed their

Case of Ham.Absalom.

memory with his special blessing, and set them forth as an example to the children of all succeeding generations.

On the other hand, we have the example of those who have pursued an opposite line of conduct, and in every instance, with the most unhappy results. Such was the case of Ham who mocked at the folly of his father, and fell under the displeasure of God. Gen. ix. Such were the sons of Eli, who would not be restrained, by the too lenient discipline of their parent but wickedly sinned against the Lord, who caused them to be slain by the sword of the Philistines. 1 Sam. iv, 17. The history of Absalom furnishes another instance not less striking—who after having stolen the hearts of the people, rebelled against his father, and was cut off from the earth by the righteous providence of God, even in opposition to the tears, entreaties and merciful intentions of his own parent. 2 Sam. xviii.

Thus we have two classes of characters for the illustration of our subject, and they are of immense moment, as they show the importance attached to the faithful performance of this duty by Almighty God. In the one is exhibited the advantages of filial piety, in the other, the awful consequences attendant on the violation

Another reason is one of promise.

of this duty. We have only then, to determine which class of examples we will imitate, and then we may easily anticipate our doom.

4. But we enforce the subject by reference to the promise. This is the commandment with promise. This, as originally expressed, stood thus: "That thy days may be *long* in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee." In this form the promise was specially adapted to the Jews. The land of Canaan was then before them; God had promised to put them in possession of it, but the continuance of that possession was annexed to the faithful performance of this duty. The spirit of the promise, therefore, is, "that thou mayst live and prosper in the world."

The duty is, therefore, commended to our consciences by arguments not less cogent, than those by which it was primarily delivered to the believing Hebrews, "That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayst prosper, enjoying both the favor of God and of good men." Such is the nature of this duty, that when it is properly performed, it will almost uniformly lead to valuable results; for the relation in which it stands to other duties of moral import, makes it a strong guarantee of uprightness and general propriety of behaviour. And hence there is scarcely one case in a thousand, where a ready and cheerful

Import of the promise.Relation to children.

compliance with this rule of conduct—an affectionate submission to parental authority—being understood, will not lead to respectability of standing in society, and perhaps to wealth. Such is the bearing of this principle on the temporal interests of men, and such the estimation in which it is held, even amidst the hurry, confusion, fraud, and speculation of the great business world.

And further, it is also to be kept in mind, that this principle is easily engrafted on the growing interests of a rising family; we may readily implant and cultivate, in our own children, those sentiments which are prominent and active in our own feelings and conduct. They are naturally inclined to imitate our example, and, therefore, if persons growing up to years of accountability, cultivate a recklessness of law and authority, disobedience to parents, a want of reverence and of affection for them, it will frequently turn up that their own children, in their turn, as if impelled by some awful principle of righteous retribution, will adopt the same pernicious course, and by their ingratitude and disobedience, teach

“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a thankless child.”

“Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may

Benefits of cheerful obedience.

be well with thee in thy reputation, in thy family circle, as to thy wife and children, and that thou mayst live long on the earth.” The connection between a virtuous life and length of days, is natural, and of Divine appointment. We admit that it is only a general rule, but still it is a rule upheld and maintained by the watchful providence of Almighty God. But, what form of virtue can be more conducive to this end, than the one inculcated in this discourse? Obedience to your parents will preserve you from places of evil resort, and from amusements of prodigal and dangerous tendency; it will defend you against dishonorable and vitiating associations, which endanger life, and wither reputation; it will invest you with the advantages of their wisdom and experience, and throw over you the protection of their character and influence; it will defend you against a thousand snares and temptations, otherwise unavoidable; it will fix deep and lasting in your moral constitution, a fitness for other still greater and more celestial excellencies; it will afford you an argument of peculiar power in maintaining moral discipline over your own children, when you shall become a parent; it will ensure to you the friendship of good men, who will love you, if for no other reason, yet because you loved your parents. And, above all,

Obey in your matrimonial arrangements.

it will secure to you the special benediction of Almighty God, who will guide you by his counsel, and at last receive you to glory.

Such are the arguments that enforce this most obvious and important duty. If, therefore, you would follow the dictates of nature, honor the law of God, imitate the best examples, and inherit the most precious promises; then obey your parents, for this is the will of God, and this the first commandment with promise. In conclusion, children obey your parents in all things involving no violation of the law of God.

Obey your parents in the formation of your matrimonial connections, so far as is consistent with a good conscience. Marriage is an event which takes place at a period in life, when children are supposed to be capable of acting for themselves, and in which they are held responsible for their own conduct both by God and man. It is, therefore, perfectly clear, that parents are not to exact a blind and implicit obedience here, or force or bribe them into a reluctant union with any person for whom they have not suitable affection. In this, as in all other questions that involve principles of moral or religious import, parents may and ought to act the part of prompt and affectionate advisers; but inasmuch as children, in an affair of this

Reasons for obedience.

kind, act for themselves, and they alone are responsible, the adoption of coercive measures is unreasonable, unnatural and cruel.

But, at the same time, the superior advantages of parents in point of age, experience and information, is a sufficient reason why their children should not only consult their judgment, but also respect their wishes on a subject of so much importance. Children ought to consider that, their parents have better opportunities to know the world, and to discern and discriminate character than themselves, and that they can in most cases appreciate more accurately, the bearing which matrimonial connections will have upon their future condition, whether considered in a civil, social or religious point of view. And, again, they ought not to forget, that they may need the counsel or assistance of their parents in performing the duties, or bearing the ills of life, and that for this reason, if no other, they should conform to their wishes, as far as they possibly can with a good conscience, in the subject now before us. In conclusion, we may refer to the fact, that it was one of the leading misfortunes in the life of Esau, that he took a wife in opposition to the wishes and in violation of the feelings of his parents. Gen. xxvi, 34—35. See also the case of Sampson. Judges xiv, 1—3.

In the selection of your society.

Obey your parents in the prosecution of your business. Let it be a rule of your life to do what they command, and as they direct you. Cultivate the habit of consulting their experience, and of honoring their judgment; and even when separated from them and engaged in business on your own responsibility, never seek an occasion to dissent from them, either in opinion or practice, but if absolutely necessary, in any case that you should do so, let it be with that affectionate diffidence, which will show how deeply you reverence and tenderly you love them. Imitate their industry and frugality, their fidelity in meeting their engagements, and generosity in relieving the distressed. This you will find to be in most cases a safe and direct way if not to wealth, yet to honor and respectability, with all truly great and good men.

Obey your parents in the selection of your society. Nothing gives affectionate and thoughtful parents greater concern than what society their children prefer, and in nothing are children more generally prone to pursue their own way, however rash or perilous. Instead of submitting to be governed in this particular by the counsel of their seniors, children too generally take the course which seems right in their own eyes, although that way terminate in infamy, sor-

Particular caution.

row and death. Of this principle in its practical developments and pernicious results, we have a striking picture in the parable of the prodigal son, Luke xv, 11—32. This piece of instruction deserves to be carefully read and studied by every young man, as affording the true origin of much of the prodigality and vice, folly and ruin, now so prevalent in the world.

“Down the smooth stream of life the stripling darts,
Gay as the morn ; bright glows the vernal sky,
Hope swells his sails, and passion steers his course.
Safe glides his little bark along the shore
Where virtue takes her stand : but if too far—
He launches forth beyond discretion’s mark,
Sudden the tempest scowls, the surges roar,
Blot his fair days, and plunge him in the deep.”

If you would avoid such a termination of your career attend to the following particulars. Never appropriate to your companions or to pleasure, the time needed and intended for business. Have the fortitude to tell them, when solicited so to do, that it is contrary to your sense of propriety, and that you regard it as a violation of obligation, as prejudicial to your character, and to the interests of your parents.

Hold such persons in the deepest abhorrence and detestation, as would insinuate that you are held in dishonorable bondage by your parents, and that it is unworthy of a young man of your

Evil of late hours.

years, and prospects, to be imprisoned in a counting house, or to be a mere cultivator of the soil. Regard such a person as a common foe, both to yourself, and your parents. Settle it in your mind as an indisputable fact that he is not only without any correct principle himself, but that he also designs to reduce you to his own infamous level. "My son, if sinners *entice thee*, consent thou not; if they say, come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole as those that go down into the pit: we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in thy lot with us, let us all have one purse: my son walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path; for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood; surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird."

Prov. i, 10—17.

Carefully avoid irregularity in your hours; do not give your parents needless pain and anxiety, by absenting yourself from home, under such circumstances as at least render your conduct suspicious; bear in mind that it is generally understood that they who keep late hours, do also keep exceptionable society; and that instances are very rare in which any person can preserve

Conclusion.

a fair reputation through any length of time in the violation of this rule; and be well assured that you will not find it less difficult than others. Your parents at least will, and, indeed, ought naturally to fear for your safety under such circumstances. How can they be otherwise than alarmed if they care for your souls, or even for your reputation, when they see you night after night going they know not where, nor with whom, and when the secrecy and mysteriousness of many of your movements give them such strong reason to suspect your fidelity and affection to them. O how often is such a course the commencement of a rapid and irretrievable ruin. To enjoy the society of gay, vain, and graceless companions, the truth is sacrificed, parents are imposed upon, and perhaps more frequently than is suspected, fraud if not robbery is ventured upon to sustain those youthful freaks of prodigality and dissipation, until at last loathsome disease, or premature death, discloses the secret history of a fallen son, or a ruined daughter: and O what a scene is there? Who can tell the unutterable grief of those heart broken parents? In a sense, most awfully true, they sorrow as those without hope, over the unchangeable fate of their froward child, whose course of life and

Conclusion.

untimely death only too clearly intimate the undying anguish of his ruined soul.

Children obey you parents in all things in subordination to the will of God, so shall it be well with you, and you shall live long on the earth. The approbation of your friends and even the respect of your enemies, and above all the blessing of God will be the lot of your inheritance, and the portion of your cup forever. Life with you will be happy, and death if not triumphant will be tranquil; and you shall enjoy the blessedness of those who, having done his commandments, have a right to the tree of life, and enter through the gates into the city of God.

DISCOURSE IV.

FAMILY RELIGION.

Joshua xxiv, 15. "But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

THE design of this discourse, is to explain and enforce the duty of family religion. A subject of vast moment, and one that is perhaps as distinctly referred to, and forcibly recommended, in these words, as in any other portion of the sacred volume. Joshua was a person of high and influential standing in the Israelitish church, and certainly is one of the most unexceptionable characters on the page of history. From a very early period in life to a good old age, he maintained a uniform and onward course in the paths of righteousness. No difficulty discouraged him, nor did any temptation lead him astray. The fear of man was no snare to him in his private capacity; nor did the love of gain nor the hope of praise, in his official relations, ever induce him to violate his obligations to God or man. It was his peculiar glory and is his imperishable fame that *he "followed the Lord fully."*

Nature of family worship.

His example, therefore, comes before us with very strong circumstances of commendation. The time when he made the declaration, the particular incidents of the occasion, the influence it was manifestly intended to have over the minds of others, as well as its personal character, and general import, are all considerations of moment, on which we might dwell with interest and profit; but our special object, as already stated, is to contemplate these words as they suggest the particular and very important duty of family religion. We shall, therefore, consider

I. The nature of this duty.

By family religion, we mean nothing more nor less than the regular and stated worship of God performed in our family capacity; and that it make an integral part of the domestic government; be appointed, upheld, and superintended by the head of the family; and be sustained by a corresponding course of life. To be more particular, we may remark, that this is *family worship*, and that it embraces all that is essential to worship under any of the circumstances of our earthly existence. The same sacred regard for the majesty and greatness of God, the same gratitude for his benefits, the same humbling views of our own sinfulness, penitential confessions and

Should be instructive and humble.

humble supplication to the Most High. It is worship in the true Scriptural sense of that word; worship offered up to God in spirit and in truth. Our temporal affairs are not to secularise our religion, but our family piety is to enlighten and sanctify all our temporal arrangements. Religion is to pervade and give character to every feature and bearing of the domestic constitution, and so to control and hallow even our household regulations, as to constitute them always the sanctuary of virtue, and occasionally, at least, as the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

The worship of God in our families ought to be *instructive*. And it should tend to enlighten and direct the minds of all under our care, to the things of God and religion. And therefore, it should comprehend the reading of the sacred Scriptures. Thus God appointed of old. (See Deut. vi, 6—9.) “And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy

Humble and penitent.

gates.” In conformity to this rule of reason and religion, Timothy received his instructions in the family circle, and thus from a child, knew the Holy Scriptures, which were “able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim. iii, 15.

The worship should be humble and penitent. The recollection of former sins, even when we are conscious of present pardon, and acceptance with God, is sufficient to sink us into the deepest dust of self-abasement. But in addition to this consideration, every family will find, within the circle of its own experience, without the toil of a laborious investigation, ample reason to say, “It is of the Lord’s mercy that we are not consumed.” If, indeed, parents have no special cause arising from a consciousness of their own aberrations from the path of duty; yet the irregularities of their children, their omissions of duty or actual commission of crime, is a sufficient reason why they should present unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit and a contrite heart, and should say unto God, “Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no flesh be justified. But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.” Such was the pious practice of the primitive saints of God, of which the history of Job affords a stri-

Family worship should be grateful.

king instance. "And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day, and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned, (have done or spoken something unbecoming religion,) and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." Job, i, 4, 5. How worthy the imitation of Christian parents, was the practice of this ancient saint of God.

This worship ought to be grateful. Hymns of praise to God are strictly appropriate as a part of family worship. The recollection of past mercies, whether received in the form of an exemption from general calamities, or in the bestowment of positive good, call for a devout and grateful acknowledgment. The blessing of health, of food to eat, and raiment to put on, of home and all its endearments, the general operations of God's righteous providence, and the still more wonderful dispensation of His grace, all present reasons why the voice of rejoicing and salvation should be heard in the tabernacle of the righteous.

It should be regular, not occasional.

Again, family worship ought to be regular, and not merely occasional. It should not be the result of particular associations or circumstances, as a tribute of respect to some minister of Christ, or pious friend, who may visit your family. Neither let it be confined to times of general calamity, as when the Divine judgments are abroad in the earth, or seasons of personal or family affliction. Nor yet should it be peculiar to times of unusual excitement in the church of Christ. If the worship of God, as performed in your family, depend on the existence of such causes, it will not only pass away like the morning cloud, and like the early dew, but will also exert a most pernicious influence on the minds and moral habits of your children. It will naturally tend to destroy their confidence in the genuineness of your piety, and strongly to alienate their hearts and minds from the fear and service of God. Let them see that your family worship is the result of conviction, that it springs from principles deeply implanted in your mind, that it is performed from a sense of duty to God, and a pious solicitude for the salvation of your own soul, as well as those of your family. Thus understood, it will be mighty to restrain them from evil, and to nurture in their hearts the seeds of every virtue. And it will be on all your family

Let it be attended by all the family.

arrangements like ointment poured forth; like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, and "As the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life evermore." Ps. cxxxiii, 2, 3.

In order to be regular, *the worship of God must be a part of the family government*. It must be wrought into the domestic constitution, as one of the essential elements in its construction, and thus it will have its peculiar place, and its appropriate time, and, like every other rule of paramount importance to the family prosperity, it will be scrupulously observed.

Again, let it not be forgotten, that it is *family* worship of which we speak, and therefore is not merely to be attended by a part, but by all the members of the household. "*As for me and my house,*" said Joshua, "*we will serve the Lord.*" LET THIS BE YOUR FAMILY MOTTO. A rule to which all shall submit under your control. Let your children always be present at the offering of the morning and evening sacrifice of praise and prayer; and if there be servants or domestics, let them also participate in this delightful privilege. For certainly, we ought to

An interesting exhibition of character.

regard it as a privilege of immense value, to pray with and for our families. To have the worship of God established beneath our own vine and fig tree, where none can hinder or make us afraid.

Surely, if there is an interesting exhibition of human nature, under heaven, one on which the angels of God delight to gaze, and over which they exercise a more than ordinary vigilance, it is such a scene as this. It is where a truly pious family are assembled to offer unto God the tribute of their heartfelt and grateful thanksgiving. Where the good man of the house gathers his family around him; wife, children, and domestics, and reading to them, out of the Word of the Lord, directs their minds to the truths of salvation. O how interesting, edifying, and instructive, is the scene where a pious family elevate their voices in hymns of praise to God, and prostrating themselves at his feet, pour out their souls in humble prayer and supplication into his parental bosom. Here, indeed, in the associations of the occasion, there is much that is morally sublime and inspiring. Who can behold, without profit, the man of God as he leads the feeble minds of his family to the throne of the heavenly grace, and by the energy of his own more ardent spirit, and the sympathy of his more active faith,

An interesting exhibition of character.

carries them into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus. With what unspeakable solicitude he deprecates the wrath of the Almighty, incurred by the folly or irreligion of his children; (see Job, i, 5;) and implores the divine blessing and protection for the time to come. Do unavoidable circumstances separate his children from him? he says with the patriarch, "O that Ishmael might live before thee." Gen. xvii, 18. Is he called to follow them to an early or premature grave, he exclaims, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job, i, 21. Here at his family altar, he humbles himself, under the mighty hand of God. He asks "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and not evil; shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Here he seeks in humble submission to the will of God, the blessings of the present life, and the more sacred and lasting enjoyments of communion with his Maker. His family worship sanctifies and sweetens his family discipline. It gives elevation to his principle, and uniformity to his character. It blends the enjoyments of heaven with the afflictions of earth, and gives fortitude and stability under the burdens and tribulations of this life by the anticipated en-

Pretext for neglect.Want of time.

joyments of that which is to come. Let us now
in the

II. Second place, point out some of the pretexts, under which this duty is neglected. To enumerate all these, and expose their fallacy, not to say the criminal indolence which suggests them, would require more time and space than we can appropriate to the subject. To notice some of the more prominent of these pretexts may be sufficient, and we may

1. Instance, "*want of time.*" "We have not time," say some, "to devote to this exercise, it is impracticable for us to attend to the regular worship of God in our families." The merchant pleads, that the customer is waiting at the counter; the agriculturalist, that the plough is standing in the furrow of the field; thus they "all begin with one consent to make excuse."

And is it possible, that without any scorching blush upon the cheek, or any secret remonstrances, or stings of conscience, without any painful apprehension of the Divine displeasure, or forebodings of future wrath, that any man, calling himself a Christian, can live in the habitual neglect of this important duty, covered only by the flimsy subterfuge, just referred to.

Want of suitable gifts.

Will it answer a valuable purpose for any one to say, at the day of retribution, when charged with having neglected the spiritual interest of his family, some of whom may have apostatised through his neglect of this duty, and most of whom peradventure have lived and died in sin, through his supineness in religion or excessive love of earthly gain; will it answer, I say, for any one to plead in extenuation of his sin, that in the greatness of his solicitude for the temporal advancement and distinction of his family, he overlooked their spiritual interests, and forgot their exposure to hell? Oh, will not the eternal judge say to such an one, "thou wicked and slothful servant." See Matt. xxv.

2. Another ground of neglect or excuse, is *the want of suitable gifts*. Men admit the obligation, and feel deeply convinced of its importance, and are convicted of the neglect of their duty, but still endeavor to excuse themselves for the omission of it under the pretence that they have not gifts to pray; but let it be remembered, that however desirable it may be, to have gifts of a superior order even to prophecy, these are by no means essential to acceptable devotion; nor are they the basis of our obligations. We are required to perform this duty not as men of superior talents, but as men placed by

No sufficient reason for neglect.

the providence of God, at the head of our families. In this relation the duty originates, and from it is inseparable. Whatever may be our abilities, these we are called upon to exercise in our families, for their moral and religious improvement.

And further, it is to be observed that according to the order of God, our gifts and graces improve with the regular and persevering performance of duty. This is a principle, which we see pervading and operating through the whole economy of nature. We behold it exemplified in the growth and perfection of every living thing. And hence it is incorporated with the moral administration of our Maker, as a principle generally understood and of acknowledged efficiency. And, therefore, they certainly are without excuse, who refuse to exercise even very moderate gifts in the performance of so important a duty, seeing that to him that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance. The proper exercise of those gifts, however limited, will not only afford an increase of personal comfort and relative usefulness, but also an enlargement of ability. See Matt. xxv, 14—30.

But who are they that complain, that they have no ability for this important branch of

Another reason for this omission.

family duty? Are they persons without the power of ready utterance? Listen to their speech on politics, trade, or the general operations of business, and who so fluent as they?

Are they persons who have no tact for the management of affairs? Witness them commence and consummate a business transaction. A purchase or sale involving the risk of a few hundred dollars, and what an exhibition of self-possession, penetration, and good judgment do you behold! Take them any where, and on any subject that commands the affections of their hearts, and there is a promptness, propriety and energy of action that secure your highest esteem. And why is it then that they have no gifts here? They have no ability, because they have no heart to pray. Place them in the midst of motives and influences congenial with their temperament, and they are instinct with life and feeling, even a spark will kindle them into flames, and an opportunity is always a reason for action. These are indisputable facts and hence arises the conclusion, that the cause of the omission of family religion, is the want of a spiritual mind, a mind favorably inclined to devotion.

3. Another reason assigned for the omission of this duty, is *the want of a cheerful concur-*

Children and domestics are not to regulate the family.

rence on the part of your families. It is urged that children absent themselves, and that domestics will not attend; or if they do, there is such a manifest listlessness and want of respect in their whole demeanor, that you dread the hour, that gives occasion for the mortifying and humiliating manifestation of their unkindness. But can this be a sufficient justification of any one in the neglect of this or any other duty they owe to God? Certainly no one can indulge a supposition so absurd and preposterous. We are not to be deterred from the path of obedience to the Most High, because that it is rendered thorny by the insolence of servants or domestics, the unnatural insubordination of children, or the opposition of well-meaning, but mistaken friends. No! but if we have difficulties, and those difficulties increase, we must increase our application to overcome them.

The government of the family is yours, and as you are supposed to have the qualifications necessary, God holds you accountable for the faithful administration of that government. He looks to you, ye fathers, as the heads of your families, to secure to Him the submission of all under your control; and to lay on his altar, on your own and on their behalf, the morning and evening oblation of praise and prayer. It is

The head of the family responsible to God.

not according to his will, as set forth in the Scriptures of truth, nor even according to the suggestions of reason, that your children or domestics, should dictate the internal regulations of your house; and much less that they should trammel your conscience in the worship of God. These arrangements are to be established by your own authority, according to the Oracles of God; and then it is their place to conform, as they value a good conscience, or the favor of the Most High. And this, we apprehend, will, in most instances, be the case, where the head of the family exhibits an example of properly enlightened, uniform, and consistent piety.—Where children are properly brought up, where they are taught to wear the yoke in their youth, and have their minds suitably impressed with sentiments of filial piety; there they will most certainly conform to the worship of God at the family altar, if not from a just sense of religion, yet from a proper regard to the feelings and authority of their parents.

And as for others, if they will not conform, so far at least as to give a decent and respectful attendance, the connection may be very easily dissolved, and most certainly ought to be. If a parent is justifiable, or rather to be commended, for excluding from his family a person, who

Additional reasons.

would tempt his children to thwart him in the ordinary affairs of life, to vex his spirit or waste his substance, how much more reasonable is it that he should do so in the concerns of religion, where the high and holy interests of the future world, are all involved? Such were the views of the royal psalmist. "I," said he, "will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart; I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me, a froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off; him that hath an high look, and a proud heart, will not I suffer; mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." *Psa. ci.* Such are the views, by which every good man ought to regulate his intercourse with his domestics. And these measures once generally adopted, we shall hear no more of the difficulty here referred to.

In addition to these more generally alleged reasons for the neglect of this duty, we may men-

Extract from Dr. Dwight.

tion yet one more, not so frequently adverted to, nor so strongly suspected as reprehensible. It is a difficulty arising out of our natural temperament or constitutional formation. The persons now referred to, are professedly of a diffident and hesitating spirit, and have little or no confidence in themselves on any subject, in which they have not been regularly educated, and hence make it a rule of life, never to assume any responsibility from which they can relieve themselves. Admitting the correctness of all that is said in behalf of this class of persons, to be indisputable, which, however, is not always the case, he certainly would be a most daring casuist who would venture to exonerate, for this reason, any one from the obligation of family worship; for, after all that even charity can hope or believe, there is still reason to fear in most cases of this description, some radical defect of Christian experience or principle. And therefore, this is very properly denominated an unhappy excuse. "I should feel myself bound to ask the author of it," says Dr. Dwight, "Are you too diffident to perform your customary business? Are you too diffident to pursue your customary amusements? Are you too diffident to commit sin? Does the bashfulness which hinders you from family prayer, hinder you also from censuring and

The true reason of this neglect.

laughing at others who practise it? Does it prevent you from using the language of profaneness? Why should you be timid only concerning the duties of religion? Is there any thing in the nature of the subject which can reasonably excite shame, or which can fairly excuse you in indulging it? Is it not true that religion itself is the thing of which you are ashamed? Remember, I beseech you, the awful declaration of Christ concerning this subject, ‘Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his glory.’ ”

But let us not disguise the true reason which operates so extensively and powerfully in the church, to the prejudice of this Christian duty. The real cause of all this delinquency, is not the want of information, of gifts, or family co-operation, but it is the want of a suitable experience in the things of God. When the heart is right, a corresponding rectitude of conduct will distinguish the life, and *vice versa*. Hence we find as a general rule, that those persons who live in the neglect of family worship, are not less deficient in other parts of Christian practice, where they have no promptings from fashion, interest or passion. That this is true of thousands, will be disputed by no one awake to the present state of

The true reason of this neglect.

the church. But who will give them the timely and needed warning? Who will lift up his voice like a trumpet, and sound an alarm in God's holy mountain? Who will show his people their transgression, and point them to their sin? Leaving this important task to those whom God may raise up for that purpose, we urge the inquiry, what will it avail any man to be a Christian merely in principle, in prejudice, in party feeling, and party enterprise? We will eat our own bread, say they, and wear our own apparel; we will contribute to the advancement of your secular, and even your spiritual pursuits; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach. And on these terms they have a name—a name that they live; and behold they are dead—dead in trespasses and in sins. And hence they are not properly identified with any of the proper movements of the church. In her temporal interests alone, are they seen or known, while in the spiritual and aggressive movements of the church on the fashions of the world, the kingdom of Satan, and the dominions of sin, they evince all the cold indifference of an alien heart. Such is the character, most generally, of those who neglect this branch of Christian duty. And here allow me to put it to the conscience of all involved in this censure, to say, whether there

Tendency to advance personal improvement.

is not just reason to fear that in that final classification of character, which will take place at the last day, this inattention to duty will be punished as disobedience, and this conformity to the world, as rebellion against the only begotten of the Father. But we cannot pursue these reflections beyond this point. Let us now turn, in the

III Place, To the arguments which enforce the regular and faithful discharge of this duty.

1. *Its tendency to advance personal improvement.* The favor of God once experienced in the pardon of sin, is not retained by the regular performance of any one or given number of Christian duties, but by the faithful discharge of all. The Scriptures of truth, and the reason of things, make it manifest, that permanent peace of mind, and a regular and rising enjoyment in the things of God, can only be realised by following the Lord fully. And, therefore, if we would not be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, this duty must be attended to, in common with all others, under a scrupulous regard to the will of God, the best interests of our families, and the solemn realities of a future world.

If a father would warm his own heart with the fires of devotion, let them be the fires that

Its bearing on family reputation.

burn on his own family altar. Here, in the midst of his own domestic circle, let him wait on God, and renew his strength; here, let him draw near to the throne of heavenly grace, and leading his family into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, teach them both by example and precept, the power and excellency of our holy religion.

2. We adduce another argument, enforcing this duty from *its bearing on family reputation*. As it gives the character of religion to the family collectively, as there can be no public religion where there is no open and public worship of God, so no family can be properly regarded as religious collectively, who do not regularly worship the Most High in their family capacity. In their individual relations they may be interesting, amiable, and even useful, but collectively, God is not acknowledged by them. And, therefore, in numbering the families of God's spiritual Israel, whatever may be the state of their minds, you cannot embrace them in the enumeration, because the blood of the sacrifice is not sprinkled upon the lintels and posts of their door. Exodus, xii, 4—7. And in their collective capacity they are not separated to the Lord their God, as a royal priesthood, and a peculiar people. 1 Pet. ii, 9. As the duty

Its power over the principles, &c. of children.

is, therefore, essential to Christian character, it is indispensable.

Again, the importance of family worship in this respect, is seen in the power it exerts over the principles and habits of the subordinate members of the family. (1.) By giving them habits of devotion, and the importance of such an influence properly directed, must be evident to all, who consider the force of habits formed in infancy, or who value the favor of God and the possession of correct principles. The tenacity with which the human mind adheres to any particular course, rendered familiar by early habits, or wrought into the mind by force of education, is a fact prominently before the world, and exemplified in the experience of every day. And this, indeed, is the great reason of any thing peculiar in the physical, intellectual or moral training that considerate parents bestow upon their children. (2.) By implanting and cultivating correct principles. In family worship, the great leading doctrines of religion are brought clearly and frequently before the mind. God is reverently adored as the great Father of the spirits of all flesh, as the upholder of universal existence, and the giver of all that is good. The sacrificial death of Christ is referred to as the only hope of fallen and guilty man. The gift

It exemplifies parental affection, &c.

of the Holy Spirit is implored to aid our infirmities, to enlighten, sanctify and seal us, to the day of redemption. The wrath of God is deprecated, as the heaviest calamity, that can befall us in this world, or that which is to come. And here the pleasures of heaven are anticipated, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And can any one suppose, for a moment, that this expression of sentiment, illustrated and sustained by a corresponding course of life, will have no power in forming the creed or fixing the religious principles of our children? Certainly not; it is morally impossible. (3.) By exemplifying parental affections. We do not design to intimate that those parents are without affection for their children, who have no family worship. But this is certain, that they do not give every reasonable and appropriate expression of that affection. In many instances, your children might say, "our parents educate us carefully; they lay up for us treasure on earth, where moth and rust corrupt; they give us many and positive instructions respecting our manners, our society, and health; but they never pray with us, nor for us; we have no family altar; they care for our bodies, but are indifferent to our souls; they weep over our sickness, but they smile at our sins." Surely such parents have not given

Collateral influence of family worship.

every suitable expression of their affection for their children, as rational, religious and immortal beings. (4.) By strengthening parental authority. If any thing can give a parent special influence over a child, certainly a becoming solicitude for the salvation of his children will have that effect. When they hear regularly morning and night, a father's prayers, witness his tears, and behold his patient and unwearied efforts to secure for them the mercy and protection of God, it is highly improbable and unreasonable that they should remain unaffected. The circumstance that gives ministers of the gospel more influence than other men, in their particular calling, is most unquestionably owing to the fact, that in public worship they lead the minds of men to God, to heaven, and eternal things, and by parity of reason, the worship of God, properly performed in the domestic circle, must give the head of the family, if a consistently pious man, a wonderful accession of influence, and governing power, over his house.

3. We may enforce this duty *by reference to its collateral influence*. There is a moral power in good example, that is not unfrequently irresistible as light, and omnipotent as truth itself; even when reflected by a single individual from the humblest condition in life. And not unfre-

Family worship specially obligatory on man.

quently, God is pleased, through this medium, to shed the illumination of his truth, and the power of his grace, on persons high and influential in the world; for he is not dependent on outward circumstances for the accomplishment of His will.

But the influence of a pious family, in which the worship of God is regularly and faithfully performed, must, in the nature of things, be infinitely greater. It cannot be otherwise than salutary; with some a restraint from vice, with others an incentive to virtue. It will cheer the heart of the faithful in the house of their pilgrimage, and put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. A pious family, walking in the fear and love of God, keeping His commandments, and statutes to do them, exhibits to the world in miniature, the concentrated excellencies of our holy religion. It is fitly compared to a light amidst surrounding darkness; and is as the salt of the earth. Here, then, we are urged to the faithful discharge of this duty from considerations of *personal improvement, the happiness of our families, and the good of society.*

4. We enforce this duty from a consideration of the fact, that *it is especially obligatory on man.*

A natural appointment.

1. *As a natural appointment of God.* Family worship is not to be regarded as a work of supererogation, but as an important part of that duty which is appropriate to man, as the subject of moral government through every period of his earthly existence. The obligation thus to worship God, naturally arises out of the relation in which man is placed to his Maker, and his family, and is, therefore, universal, and indestructible. Nor can it be dispensed with, under any circumstance, but is binding on all men through all time. That God ought to be worshipped, and that His worship ought to be publicly performed, are self-evident truths. And hence men in the earlier ages of the world, who were decidedly pious, regularly worshipped God in their own tents. The tabernacle was their church, and the family circle a distinct and complete religious organisation. The changes that have passed upon society by the increase of population, which has swelled families into nations, and nations into vast multitudes, by no means dissolve this original obligation, or obviate the necessity for this primary form of religious worship. These can only render it more binding, because the faithful performance of this duty is the more needed to secure the ends of

Essential to religion.

good government in the domestic circle, and in the civil relations of men. But

2. *This duty is obligatory on man*, as an essential part of true religion under every dispensation of grace. In the time of the patriarchs, parents were not only required to be persons fearing God, and working righteousness, but religion was also to be a prominent character in their household arrangements. Thus the family of Abraham was the church of God. But this was not a solitary instance; his descendants also walked in the observance of the same pious usage. Such also were the family regulations of righteous Job, c. i, 5. Under the Old Testament dispensation, the same principle was distinctly recognised, and is, if any thing, more prominent, and not less powerful and extensive in its operation, and hence in all those dark periods of national dereliction from the religion of the true God, so common in Jewish history, the family circle of the pious few became the asylum of persecuted truth and virtue, until the clouds of superstition were dispersed, and the tumult of human passion had subsided; and thus, indeed, it has been in all those gloomy periods of persecution and tribulation, through which the church of Christ has passed, down to the present day.

The duty of family worship is distinctly re-

The paschal lamb.

cognised in the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage. The blood of the first paschal lamb, being sprinkled on the door posts of every house, occupied by the Israelites, was, to all intents and purposes, a most solemn act of *family worship*; an expressive declaration of their faith, and an effectual means of their preservation: and the same principle is distinctly seen in all the regulations of that peculiar people, whether designed to govern them in their duties toward God, or in their intercourse with each other. And if the duty is not formally enjoined on the disciples of Christ, in the New Testament scriptures, it is because that it is so obviously and necessarily implied that habitual spirituality of mind, watchfulness and devotion, is essential to vital godliness, as to render a special command unnecessary.

The considerations then that it was the earliest form of public worship, that it has been distinctly recognised in the religious institutions of the Old Testament Church, and that it is necessarily implied in the more spiritual dispensation of the gospel, present an argument of peculiar force, sufficient it would seem to us to move every honest mind. If then we regard our personal improvement, the good of our families, the interests of society, and above all the favor of our

The resolution of Joshua was personal.

God, then let us adopt the spirited resolutions in the text—"As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

But here let it be remembered, that this is an example of *personal* religion. Whatever is implied in the service of God, Joshua was resolved to perform. If there were privations, he was willing to endure them; and as he hoped to inherit the rewards, so he was willing to endure the tribulations of righteousness. The importance of this resolution, under this view must be self-evident to all who consider how our private and public character, our personal and relative duties, do of necessity mutually influence each other; hence no person can be a good officer, (say a magistrate,) who is not a good citizen, nor can any man be a good father, husband, or head of a family, who is not a good man. In view of this fact, we suppose that Joshua published the resolution contained in the text.

Again, in this resolution, Joshua pledges himself *for his family*; "as for me and my house." It is true that he could not be pious for them any more than for other persons. But still he could exercise the influence of example, and the restraints of authority; to direct them in the paths of righteousness.

He would superintend the formation of their

He pledges himself for his family.

religious opinions. He would see that they should not worship the gods whom their fathers served on the other side of the flood; nor the gods of the Amorites, in whose land they dwelt; but that they should fear the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt, and fed them all their life long, and Him only.

He would direct and restrain their intercourse with the world. Joshua knew well the dangers as well as the enjoyments of social life; and hence he pledges himself, to afford his family every necessary defence, against the cunning craftiness of ungodly men, who lie in wait to deceive;—he would see that the business, recreations, society, moral and religious opinions of his family, should not be defective, erroneous or sinful as a consequence of his neglect. To prevent it, he will give them the benefits of his pious example, the instructions of his wisdom, the defence of his authority, and all that a pious father's care and kindness could confer. This, and even more, are comprehended in the pious resolution of this holy man, and it most certainly has strong claims on our imitation.

As it is the resolution of an *independent* mind, “choose ye (said he) *this day*, whom ye will serve, but as for me, I do not hesitate. I see my duty and that is my choice, and as for

An independent mind.

me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua was not a feeble minded man, whose religious opinions were dictated by the multitude, or took their complexion from the spirit of the times. He was no visionary enthusiast, nor dreaming mystic, but a man of vast and capacious soul, whose naturally exalted mind, had been wonderfully refined, expanded and elevated by the thrilling inspirations of the living God.

This was the resolution of a *pious* mind, since Joshua was a man deeply experienced in the things of God. He was with Moses on the Mount; he heard the trumpet and thunder, and saw the lightning, the fire, and the glory of the Lord, on Mount Sinai; and, therefore, his knowledge of spiritual things was of a most exalted form, acquired in the very verge of heaven. And his religious experience must, in the nature of things, have received the highest polish the hand of God can impress on human nature. And hence he was the companion of Moses, while living, and his successor when dead; and hence he was enabled to maintain his religious career through a long life of immense toil and peril, with even increasing reputation, and at length to conclude it with unclouded glory. Thus the example of Joshua was commended to the conscience and

Expostulation.

sympathies of every pious Jew; but to us it comes with an accumulation of power, proportioned to the increase of our advantages.

Without extending these reflections further, we shall conclude with a few words of expostulation with such as neglect this solemn duty. And here we have those who once engaged most heartily in its performance; their family altar stood out prominently in their domestic arrangements, and the fires of a consistent Scriptural devotion, were kept burning on it continually. Morning and evening, the pious father led his family to the foot of the throne, saying, "Come, let us bow down and worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for we are the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his care." Those were seasons of refreshing from the presence of God, times never to be forgotten; when the candle of the Lord burnt brightly on their head. But these days, alas! are gone by. Weeks, months, and years, have now passed away, since you last assembled your family for morning or evening prayer. Now day and night regularly succeed each other as formerly, but neither are sanctified by the services of religion. There is no longer a sacrifice of praise, or the voice of supplication. 'The word of God now lies neglected, your harp is hung on the willows,

Exhortation.

and unfortunately you have resigned yourself an easy prey, if not to the power of Satan, yet to the fashions of the world, and the fear of man.

Brethen, where will these things end? Will they not plant your dying pillow with thorns, and make the cup of death excessively bitter with the wormwood and gall of an unavailing repentance? Can you hope to die in peace, with the recollection of your past unfaithfulness staring you fully in the face? How will you assemble your children around your dying couch, and give them your final charge? Will you then be able to say, "I have fought a good fight," and encourage your children to imitate your patient faith, and cheerful hope in the work of God? No, verily—at best you will be dumb, confused, and condemned. Awake, then, thou slumbering spirit, and consider from whence thou art fallen. Repent, and do thy first works over again. Rebuild thy family altar; assemble thy neglected family, and falling down before the Lord, your Maker, offer unto Him a sacrifice of a broken heart; so shall he restore unto thee the joy of His salvation, and heal thy backslidings, and love thee freely.

2. We may offer a word of *exhortation* to those who have never taken up this cross. You have feared to engage in this part of your duty;

Exhortation.

want of gifts, of grace, of confidence, has deterred you. But remember, that more than ordinary gifts are not necessary; the sacrifices of God are not sublimity of thought, and elegance of expression. The Almighty lays no stress on the well-turned period, and the well-tuned voice. He "is a spirit, and they who worship Him, must do it in spirit and in truth." You can draw near to God with an humble and devoted mind, and this is the all-important part of worship. Be persuaded, then, at once, without further delay, to begin this good work, and as ground of encouragement, remember, that God has graciously promised to increase your gifts, with the exercise thereof. Do what you can, and God will enable you to do more. He will proportion your strength to your day, and you will soon be enabled to regard this duty as a privilege. The yoke will become easy, and the burden light. And at your family altar, God will manifest himself unto you, even as he does not manifest himself unto the world.

Consider, also, that family worship is an essential part of that religious example and instruction, children are entitled to expect at your hand. And that it will give broader and deeper foundations for your authority, and greater efficiency to discipline in family government. Your children

Conclusion.

will not only regard you as their natural superior and governor, but also as their religious instructor and friend. They will admire your uniform and fervent piety, and holy sympathy for their souls. And hence they will love you the more for having prayed with and for them.

How unspeakable is the privilege that we may thus enjoy, of anticipating the blessedness of the millennial glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth as the waters cover the face of the great deep. Already we sit under our own vine and fig tree, and none can hinder or make us afraid. We all unite in singing one song of salvation to God. We unite in presenting the same sacrifice of gratitude and love, and look forward with transport to the day, when, with all the family above, our redeemed spirits, free from all the corruption and infirmities of earth, shall rest forever in the bosom of our Father and God.

DISCOURSE V.

MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

1 Tim. vi, 1—2. “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.”

THE peculiar habits of thought, which prevail in our own country, on all questions relating to the organisation of society and the various modes under which it exists, render it expedient, although it may not be strictly necessary, to lay down a few general principles at the commencement of this discourse, which we honestly believe to be founded in correctness, and which we therefore desire most sacredly to maintain.

The principles referred to give their distinctive complexion to the civil institutions of our country, and we regard them as being planted in the moral constitution of man, by the great Author of his being. To us they appear to be distinctly recognised in the whole scheme of

Introduction.

God's moral administration, and to give to Christianity that peculiar character of benevolence which changes, under its salutary influence, this world of strife, anarchy and confusion, into one vast brotherhood.

The principles referred to are these—That all men do by nature sustain the same relation to God, whether they subsequently become masters, or servants; and that, therefore, by nature, no man is either a master or servant; there is no superiority on the one hand, nor inferiority on the other. By nature they both are equal, and sustain the same relation to God, as the creatures of his mercy and care. That real worth, or moral character, is not to be estimated by external circumstances of wealth, education, or office, but by reference to moral principles and habits of life; and that, therefore, men are to be valued, not so much for the places they occupy in society, as for the manner in which they discharge the duties of their respective stations. This is manifestly the test of character with God, and it ought to be with men. This will be the rule of judgment in eternity, and it ought to be the great regulating maxim of society in time.

With these preliminary reflections, designed to guard against a misapprehension of terms

Who are comprehended in this command?

that may be used, or sentiments that may be expressed, in this discourse, we proceed to the more immediate explanation of our subject, in which we propose to inquire:

1st. *Who are comprehended in this command?* “Let as many servants as are under the yoke,” &c. The principle is most distinctly set forth in the text, and indeed is insisted on throughout the sacred volume, that men should render to each other, not only that general regard which is due from man to man, viewed as a rational or sentient being—but also that more particular respect that is grounded on those distinctions which seem inevitably to arise, out of all regularly organised, and well established governments. Men are to be revered for their office, even when we cannot esteem them for their virtues; for the office itself may be valuable, perhaps essential to the maintenance of civil order, even when filled by an incompetent or an unworthy incumbent. And, therefore, every good citizen will, for the time being, render the honor that is due to office, although that honor is conferred on an unworthy person. He will not violate his own obligations to bring other persons to a proper observance of theirs, but rendering to all their dues, tribute to whom

Religion conducive to civil order.

tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor, he will pursue the path of uprightness, and leave to the slow but salutary provisions of the civil constitution, or the righteous providence of Almighty God, to correct those evils which lie beyond his individual right or power to control. Hence we read, let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God; "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Romans, xiii, 1—2.

In the Christian religion, which, by the way, is the only reasonable system of religious and moral truth, the only one that subserves the good of man individually and in the aggregate; that gives vigor to private virtue and equality, consistency and efficiency to public rule, these are well established principles—and are most strikingly exemplified in the life and conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ and all his apostles, and they form essential and ever acting elements in the moral habits and religious experience of every genuine Christian. Because, whatever may be our natural rights, these are never so effectually guarded nor so rationally enjoyed as

Special application of general principle.

when we perform the part of good subjects of that particular form of civil government, under which, in the providence of God, we may happen to have our existence.

In the text, the apostle makes a special application of this general principle. As many as are under the yoke, are here, required to count their own masters worthy of all honor;” that is, as many as are under the yoke who sustain the subordinate relation of servant; or, in other words, who are neither parents nor children, nor relations, but subordinate members of the family circle. This view of the subject comprehends—

1. Such as were in a state of *involuntary bondage*. Not that the apostle intended to justify the practice of holding men in such a state of moral, intellectual, and civil degradation. To treat of this question, so far as it involves the natural and unalienable rights of men, was not his design. The apostles, in strict imitation of their Divine Master, scrupulously avoided all questions having a tendency to disturb the order of civil government in those countries where they exercised their ministry. They did not regard themselves as political reformers, but as messengers of salvation, and ministers of peace, who were specially appointed by the Lord Jesus

Such as are in involuntary bondage.

Christ, not for the purpose of explaining and defending the civil rights of men, but for the still holier purpose of teaching them words whereby they might be saved; to warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that they might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. And hence, without once touching the question of their natural and civil rights; without referring to the almost unbounded prerogatives of the civil ruler; the arbitrary distinction between master and slave, they adhered strictly to their particular work of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The apostle, therefore, does not inquire into the history of their misfortune, (whom he addressed,) whether they were taken captives in war—violently torn by heartless men from their parents, homes and children, or gotten by barter or sale; this point he leaves untouched. As the relation itself was recognised and established by law, and the persons addressed sustained this relation, and could not be released unless by the consent of their owners, without violence and confusion, the apostle urges them to such a course of life, as would exemplify the power of Christianity in their personal meekness, fidelity and love. Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters

The apostles give no judgment on the abstract question.

worthy of all honor, that the name of God, and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters let them not despise them, because they are brethren, but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railing, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness.

But are we to infer from this mode of instruction, that the apostle gives the sanction of inspiration to the practice of holding men in a state of involuntary bondage? Most certainly not. He expresses no judgment on this question any more than he does upon any other incidental circumstance of human life. And, therefore, it would be as absurd to infer from the instruction given by the apostle above referred to, that this practice is reasonable, just, and acceptable to God, as to argue that because he enjoins obedience to kings, he does thereby give his sanction,

But may be inferred from the character of Christianity.

as an inspired writer, to a monarchical form of civil government, to the exclusion of all others.

The sentiment of the apostle on this, and all similar questions, is not to be inferred from any occasional remark or injunction they may have felt it their duty to deliver. But from the general character of Christianity, its spirit of sympathy, tenderness, and love; its avowed design and manifest tendency to destroy the malign passions of the human heart—to subdue the pride, ambition, enmity, and cruelty of our nature, and to place the entire family of mankind under the active power of supreme love to God, and ardent benevolence towards each other.

When the apostles exercised their ministry, this form of human wretchedness obtained among men to a most frightful extent; and it still exists, variously modified, it is true, but milder only in proportion, as the benign religion of the New Testament has shed its ameliorating influence on the civil and social institutions and relations of men. Its existence must always be regarded not only as an inconvenience, but as one of the natural consequences of moral evil, and hence we may both rationally and Scripturally expect, that as this is one of the effects of sin, it will ultimately be removed as one of the inevitable results of that universal spread of the truth

Apprentices.

A relation of choice.

as it is in Jesus, for which we are taught to pray; which God has graciously promised, and which Christ died to purchase, and which he ever lives to accomplish. In the meantime, we exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

2. Another class of persons comprehended in this injunction of the apostle, are *apprentices*. Such persons as are regularly bound by their parents, guardians, or themselves, and are held under the obligations of an indenture. That this particular form of the relation was referred to by the Apostle, can hardly be questioned by any one, when it is considered how fairly it is embraced in the general principle here laid down, that as many as are under the yoke, that is, are in a state of servitude, should count their masters worthy of all honor. Certainly, if there is any propriety, reason, or righteousness in this command, anywhere, it is in this particular application.

(1.) Because that it is a relation of *choice*. The individual who becomes an apprentice, does it with the concurrence of his own mind; if he is imposed upon by the exaggerated or

A relation of personal advantage.

false representations of his parents, guardians, or others, which it is to be feared is sometimes the case, this is his misfortune, and is one of those common inconveniences of life against which we have no protection, save the proper exercise of our own faculties, the fidelity of our friends, or the vigilant and impartial administration of civil law. But still, the parties are presumed to have a fair understanding; their duties and responsibilities are clearly defined, and, all things considered, if this is not the best, it is regarded as equal to any other arrangement the parties can make for their advantage respectively, and is, therefore, entered into as a reasonable one, and as such is a matter of choice.

(2.) Because that it is a relation of *personal advantage*. Whatever may be the result, ultimately there can be no doubt but that both master and apprentice propose to themselves personal advantage as the consequence of such a relation. Without it the one would not submit to the restraints, nor would the other incur the responsibilities which it imposes. But then it will readily be perceived that, in the nature of things, the balance of advantage between the master and his apprentice must always be in favor of the latter. Because it matters not how early in life the connection may be formed, it

An inducement to fidelity.

uniformly terminates at that period, in which our intellectual and physical nature have attained to such a degree of maturity, as renders our time and services most valuable. Thus, the plain state of the case is this, that while the apprentice is controlled by the foibles of youth, unformed in his character and imperfect in his business, he serves his master. But as the levities of boyhood are succeeded by the more excellent developments of mature age, and the mere novice becomes a proficient in his business, he serves himself. We would not be understood to insinuate that there is any thing unfair in this arrangement, or that it ought to be otherwise. Because the common consent and uniform course of society on this subject is an ample guarantee of its correctness. But to us it does appear, in view of this fact, that the obligations of this relation ought to be more sacredly regarded, than is the case, perhaps, in most instances.

But once more: As an inducement to fidelity in his calling, an apprentice ought to remember that he gets his master's business, or art, for the consideration of his own service; while he is, himself, yet a minor, and would not under any circumstances, be entitled to the control of his own time, or the proceeds of his own labor; and

Another class of persons.

thus, even in his youth, he is, by the acquirement of a profession, art, or trade, securing to himself the means both of wealth and reputation, when he shall have become of age. This certainly is, or ought to be a very strong inducement to aspire to eminence, to endeavor to excel in his calling, as a circumstance which will at once render his services more valuable, improve his character, and open a more ready and certain medium to success in business.

3. A third class of persons here referred to, *is such as, having the control of their own time;* choose either for considerations of convenience, or gain, to engage in the service of others. They most certainly are under the yoke, and it is indisputably certain that whatever rights they may have naturally, and in their separate capacity, these become more or less abridged, and variously modified by the different relations they form, or engagements they enter into with others;—and we certainly need not be informed that a good man, one that is upright in his principles and habits, will act in all things according to that particular modification of his rights which has been thus created, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. The duties more particularly binding on persons in this relation to society are,

Respect for their employers.

(1.) *Respect for their employers.* We suppose that it will not be disputed that there is a manifest difference between him who is employed and his employer so far as their relation is regarded; and although they are mutually dependant, because the one cannot do without the other in either case, (for “the king himself is served of the field,”) yet there is an inequality, the one is entitled to command, the other is under obligation to obey. The employer evidently has more rights, more power, and proportionately greater responsibility; and even where this is not the case, their rights and responsibilities are essentially different. We do not say, that there is any inherent difference, that the one is less worthy for being poor or the other more so for being rich; but the one, by being in the employment of the other, is for the time being subordinate; and as a consequence, it is his business to do what the other commands, because for this he receives his wages, and for this he entered into his obligation.

And hence the pleasure of the employer ought always to be consulted; for it is manifest that if any one person be engaged to transact the business, or perform the labor of another, it is but reasonable that he should consult the

Family regulation in particular.

pleasure of his employer, and that it should be his aim to promote it. The reason for this is self-evident; the party employed receives his wages for this very consideration, not simply to labor, but to labor according to the will of the employer, it being absurd to suppose that any one would engage the services of another, and give him a reward for the transaction of his business in an exceptionable manner.

(2.) *A respect for their family regulations.* Every family has, or ought to have its own particular and distinct code of rules for domestic government; and it is but reasonable that all persons, on entering into a family, be required to understand what those regulations are, and, while they continue in the family, to conform to them: but if in conscience they cannot, or through perverseness will not conform, they ought in all propriety to change their situation; it being unreasonable to suppose that the harmony and order of a whole family should be interrupted and displaced to gratify the caprice or eccentricities of any individual, and more especially when that individual is comparatively a young person, and withal a stranger. Therefore, whatever may be the nature of those rules, which govern the domestic circle, whether they relate to the hours of rising, or retirement to rest, the time or

The true glory of Christian character.

manner of business, the entertainment of company, or any other of the details of life, they are to be scrupulously respected; and to conform to them, should be considered as one part of the service for which the person employed receives his or her wages; and hence it manifestly indicates a very imperfect sense of propriety, of what is just and proper for any one, and more particularly a professor of religion, to break through such regulations, pretending in justification of their conduct, zeal for the honor of God, as if he required robbery for sacrifice. Isa. lxi, 8.

The true glory of the Christian character consists in acting fully up to the measure of our obligations in the various relations of life. This is, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. Hence, says the apostle, "I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. For so is the will of God, that with well doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." 1 Peter, ii, 11—12—15.

It is exceedingly to be regretted that there

Another branch of duty.Fidelity in business.

are professors of religion, both male and female, who seem not to see the importance of the subject to which we refer, but rashly pursue their own course to the great inconvenience of those families with whom they reside, to the discredit of religion, and their own reproach and destruction.

2. Another branch of the duty that persons in this relation are bound to observe, is *fidelity, or honesty in the discharge of their trust*. For, as they are engaged to render certain service for a stipulated reward, so it is required of them to perform all that was fairly implied or understood, in their contract, notwithstanding whatever opportunity derived, or temptation occurring, from the manner of the engagement, to equivocate or defraud. And hence, those sudden and capricious separations which frequently take place between persons in the business relations of life, partake very largely of the nature of injustice, especially since they are scarcely ever anticipated or embraced in the calculations of either party, and nearly always are more or less injurious. It is sometimes next to starvation for the one to be thrown out of business, and in other cases it is almost ruin to the other to be forsaken by those in his employment.

Persons are not only to do their duty, but also

Another branch of fidelity.

to do it according to their original engagement, and in such a manner as would give themselves satisfaction, in a reverse of circumstances. This is one of the great distinguishing principles of Christianity. "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." We may still further remark, that there can be no question, but that it is a direct fraud in the sight of God, to neglect a man's business, or to perform it in a careless and insufficient manner, when he has entrusted it to your care, and given you a reward to execute it according to his will. It is, in effect, the same thing as to purloin his money, or waste his capital in any other way, because that it may give to his affairs a turn equally as disastrous in the issue. And, therefore, as on the fidelity of a single individual in the service or employment of another, may depend the business, reputation, domestic peace, safety, and comfort of a numerous family, they are not to render merely an eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing "whatever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be *bond* or *free*." Eph. vi, 6, 8.

Once more. All persons who are admitted

Unguarded conversation in the family circle.

into the bosom of a family, in the relation of domestics, are thereby placed in a situation to perceive whatever is peculiar in the family character, its habits and government, the foibles of children, and griefs of parents, the insubordination of the one and painful solicitude of the other, with the numerous little incidental developments of character, and circumstances of disappointed hope, and irritated feeling, so common to the present life; and are therefore bound by every rule of propriety, moral honesty and religion, to respect the confidence that is thus reposed in them; because that this is implied in the very nature of the relation they sustain, it being inconceivable that any person should be admitted into the sacred familiarities of the domestic circle, whose want of principle or malignity of nature, would dispose him to violate the principle embodied in this rule of conduct. And also, because it is a flagrant transgression of that broad principle of our holy religion, which teaches us to "do unto others as we would that they should do unto us."

Does any one inquire what are the things referred to, in relation to which confidence is exercised; I answer that a thousand might be named. But to instance only a few:—The general run of table-talk and fire-side conversation, in most families is such, that however harmless

Tale bearing.Case of Job's wife.

it may be, while under cover of family confidence, it bears a strong resemblance to those chemical affinities in nature, which ignite and explode on exposure to a free circulation of air. It is, therefore, always understood, that they are not to be exposed, nor can they, without endangering in many instances, it may be the reputation of a family, or the peace of a neighborhood. The innocence of such conversation is not the question that now occupies our attention. Be that as it may, we insist that domestics are under obligations to regard those things as committed to their confidence, and that to relate them, is to go up and down as a tale-bearer, contrary to the express word of God. Lev. xix, 16.

Without intending to insinuate any thing unfriendly to that free flow of soul, and commingling of spirit, peculiar to the family circle, I hold that there is a great deal said incautiously, or unseasonably, or that ought not to be said at all. And there are, also, little ebullitions of feeling, moments of nervous excitement, or business vexation; seasons of mental gloom and depression, and unaccountable restlessness, or languor of spirit, in which persons speak without thought, and without intention. It may have been in such a season that Job's wife said to him, "Curse God, and die." Job, ii, 9. And under

Advantages of domestics.

Reprehensible practice.

similar feelings, that good man himself, may have exclaimed, "Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me." Many other cases might be given from the sacred history, in further illustration of this sentiment, but let this suffice.

A shrewd and discriminating domestic will soon enter into the understanding of the family government, and be able to trace any little eccentricities in the general movement to their proper cause, whether it be some defect of principle, or experience. Whatever it may be that renders the government either rigid or remiss, will naturally and necessarily fall under their observation. But is a person in this relation, therefore, at liberty to give publicity to all that has come to their sight and hearing? Most certainly not. For this confidential respect is one important part of that service, they are employed to render.

The conduct, therefore, of such persons as go from house to house, and from one family to another, disclosing and circulating whatever they think weak or exceptionable, in those with whom they have previously resided, is to be regarded as a violation of even heathen morality, and much more of the pure religion of the Son of God. And if possible, still more infamous is the

Motives.	Temporal advantages.	Character.
practice of those heads of families who endeavor, through the cringing sycophancy of their hirelings, to pry into the secrecies of others. Whether they are actuated by envy, or by any other malign passion of the human heart, there is every thing superlatively vile in the manner in which they first employ, and then abandon their dependants, as the mean and worthless tools which they have reluctantly used in the execution of a low-minded and infamous transaction. We turn		

II. To set before you the motives to such a course of conduct as we have already described. We shall consider these as motives of temporal and spiritual advantage.

1. *Temporal advantages.* These are numerous; the first we shall mention is *character*. The importance of reputation, that is, a good name, is proverbial. Without it a man is scarcely a living being. He is dead while he liveth; but with a fair reputation, whatever may be his condition in the world, he has an indisputable claim to public confidence and patronage, a letter of commendation to all people, an easy passport into the society of his equals every where, and an acknowledged right to the attention and sympathy of such as are confessedly his

Its value.Elements of character.

superiors in mind, fortune, and influence. And hence, "a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; and loving favor rather than silver and gold." Prov. xxii, 1.

Let me intreat you to bear this in mind, that character is the result of no particular condition in life, but arises from the manner in which we perform the duties of any particular situation assigned us in the providence of God. Attention to business, habits of industry, carefulness, promptitude, fidelity, and cheerfulness in executing the commands of an employer or master, will always have their reward, if not from those who are more immediately benefitted by your good conduct, yet from others; for such is the wise and merciful arrangement of Divine Providence, that it will, in some way, so turn out that such a person will come into notice, and have their reward. And just as naturally will a person of an ill-nature or captious temper, or one who is unfaithful in his business, find his way made rough and uncomfortable, whatever may be his capabilities; for men generally wish to be pleased, and, in most instances, prefer it to profit.

Allow me also to suggest, as another element of character, regularity of your hours, and a discreet selection of your society. Bear in mind, that God has decided, that evil communications

Another motive.	Gain.	Scriptural.
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corrupt good manners. And that as he who walketh with wise men shall be wise, so a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Attention to these general principles in their bearing on the details of life, will guarantee to any one the confidence of those with whom he may be associated, and elevate him to a respectable standing in his own particular calling, and the want of these will always be a radical defect in the claims of any to patronage and respectability.

2. *Another motive is gain.* Character itself is wealth, because that persons of good reputation, as honest and competent in their business, will not only obtain employment more readily than others, but will also obtain it on better terms. And, therefore, propriety of conduct and fidelity in the execution of your trust (without which character cannot be obtained,) will naturally lead, if not to affluence, yet to competency. And that this is a proper motive to set before you, we need no farther proof, than that it is so employed in the oracles of God; the rule is fairly implied in those general principles of Christian morality, which teach us to live soberly and righteously, as well as godly in the world; and also that godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and

Special providence of God.

that which is to come. This, it is true, is not the noblest motive that can actuate the heart of man, but still it is a proper one, because that it is one of Divine appointment.

It will scarcely be denied that the course of life here laid down, will be profitable in the respects named above. And that it will preserve you from many and needless expenses, and will, also, lead to habits of thoughtfulness and frugality; by which your little substance will gradually, but certainly, accumulate upon your hands, and thus afford you the means of doing good to others, as well as of enlarging and multiplying your own comforts. Such is the natural course of things. But we are not to overlook the special providence of God, which is also engaged, in various ways, to promote the temporal prosperity of such as love and fear Him; thus in one instance, he will raise up special friends, as in the case of Ruth. (See Ruth, ii.) And in other cases, even cause your enemies to be at peace with you. (See history of Joseph, Gen. xli.) Or he will render the special services of friendship needless, by some unexpected prosperity, "for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" and he bestoweth it on whomsoever he will.

And it is also to be observed, that the various

Way to distinction.

conditions in life depend very much on personal worth, capabilities, and effort. And hence, an individual in the humblest condition in life, may rise to the most enviable position of wealth, office, or influence in society. In our country, this is emphatically the case. Here

“Honor and shame from no condition rise,
Act well your part, there all the honor lies.”

The way to distinction is open to all, and the only tribute exacted by any candidate for a more elevated condition in life, is talent, moral worth, and perseverance. Behold this sentiment exemplified in the history of thousands of your fellow-citizens. The rich men of this generation in many instances, were the poor men of the last; and the secret of their advancement is found in the doctrines already laid down. On the other hand, many who are now most highly exalted, are obviously nodding to their fall. Thus the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord endureth forever. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can, by any means, redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live forever, and not see corruption, for he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool; and the brutish persons perish, and leave their wealth to others.

Third argument.

Conscience.

Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. "Nevertheless, man being in honor abideth not, he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings." Psal. xlix, 6—13. But in vain are the puny efforts of feeble man to arrest the action of these principles in the Divine administration that declare him to be a God without partiality, and which preserve this general equality among his intelligent creatures.

3. *A third argument is one of conscience.* That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. Whether it be true or not, the practice very generally obtains of ascribing the general tenor of a man's life to the force of his religious principles; and perhaps no solid objection can be urged against the practice, seeing it is a rule established by Divine authority, that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh," and that "the tree is known by its fruit." Therefore, if a person profess the religion of Christ, even under the most Scriptural views, and his life be irregular, that irregularity will be held to be a contradiction of his profession, which in this case will be regarded

The church of Christ.

merely as a cloak of licentiousness, taken upon him for sinister ends.

In view of this fact, the apostle urges believers in the Lord Jesus in all the various relations of life, so to conduct themselves before men, as to make a fair and honorable impression on the public mind in behalf of our holy religion. He exhorts them so to live, that they may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

The church of Christ is composed of persons from all the different conditions in life, and is designed to be, in a modified sense, the medium of communication between God and the world. It is, in the hand of our Almighty Redeemer, the divinely appointed instrumentality of the world's conversion; and when fully imbued with the spirit of its original organization, the great conservative principle of all good order and moral virtue among men. It is, in the order of God, the medium through which the light of truth and the power of salvation, are sent forth to dispel the darkness and superstition of the human mind; to lead the weary and forsaken to the palace and presence of God; and to change the moral desolations of this sin-smitten earth, into one vast field of fertility and loveliness. In this great work of enlightening and regenerating the world, every

Ministers.

department of the church is to perform that part allotted it in the providence of God. Every man is to bear his own cross, and in the faithful discharge of those duties proper to his own particular calling, to show forth the glory of God. All are not required to engage in the use of the same means, nor in the prosecution of the same particular ends for the manifestation of the honor of Christ; but to act out those general principles of purity, righteousness, and love, so uniformly inculcated in the oracles of God; and thus, by well-doing, to let their light so shine before men, that others seeing their good works, may glorify their "Father, who is in heaven."

Ministers operate upon large masses of the community, from the pulpit or the press; and impressions thus made, are often followed up to advantage, by epistolary intercourse or pastoral visitation; but these are not the only means used by the great head of the church, to establish His truth in the hearts of men. He is pleased frequently to employ the feeblest means for the accomplishment of great and holy ends; even things that are nought, to bring to nought things that really are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

As ministers are compared to burning and shining lights, who illumine the king's highway

Influence of pious domestics.

of holiness, so the persons here addressed may be regarded as secondary lights, who shed their benign influence, where the ministry and the regular means of spiritual improvement are disregarded, and their efficiency denied, and thus the religion of Jesus receives, in the more retired scenes of domestic life, and through the medium of subordinate members in the family circle, its most forcible exemplifications. The instances are not rare, of persons who have been proof against all other forms of argument, that have been perfectly unable to resist the demonstration, which a good life affords of the power and excellency of religion.

Let it be settled in your mind, then, that you are to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour; and that the honor of Christ, who bought you not with gold or silver, or corruptible things, but with his own most precious blood, is advanced or tarnished by your deportment, as it conforms to, or diverges from the moral precepts of his gospel. And therefore, while you seek the welfare of your employers, it is to be done in subordination to His will. "Do all things as unto God;" this is the maxim by which you are to govern your tempers, select your society, and regulate your conversation. No person can be bound to break the Sabbath, to do a fraudulent business,

Their rights.

Reasonable employment.

or assist therein, or in any other way incur the displeasure of the Most High. And therefore, no person, a professor of religion especially, should continue under such arrangements as expose them to a temptation to such a course. Let them rather leave their situation, than continue in it, at the sacrifice of a good conscience, and the favor of God.

The power of such an example on families in which you reside, is incalculable, both on parents and children, and especially on others, sustaining the same relation with yourselves. These are the arguments, in part, by which we enforce the duties enjoined in the text. These motives address themselves both to your reason, your feeling, and your temporal and eternal interests, as the only way to reputation, gain, and godliness, which has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

III. We shall point out some of the rights of persons in those relations, with the corresponding obligations of master and employers.

1. *Their employment should be reasonable;* such as is fit and proper considering their age, health, capabilities, and wages. Although it is not true in every case, yet as a general rule, employers are supposed to have a better under-

Advantages of employer.

Its abuse.

standing of the value of labor, than those whom they employ, and also of the difficulties attending it in any given case, and hence have the advantage in forming a contract. And it is to be feared, that, in too many instances, they avail themselves of this superiority to ensnare their fellow-men of less discernment, or whose pressing necessities compel them to accept of employment, on almost any terms. How many are induced by fair speeches and misrepresentations, to engage to do what is actually impracticable, or cannot be accomplished without great sacrifice of health, and exposure of life, and all for a very uncertain and meagre compensation. The various cases to which this remark applies, will readily occur to the reader. And it deserves to be noticed with emphatic detestation, that the more poor and dependent the hireling, the greater his exposure to this form of injustice and oppression; a poor widow, an orphan boy or girl, an alien, or a stranger, or a half-witted person, one who is without friends, or depressed in circumstances, is by far, more liable thus to be injured by the avaricious policy of iron-hearted men, than persons differently conditioned in life; whereas the very fact of their destitution strengthens their claims on our sympathy and protection, and dyes to crimson hue, the unmitigated wickedness of their oppressors.

Employment of apprentices. Intellectual Improvement.

The employment of an apprentice should be enforced by reasonable discipline. Let a master have his rules for the government of his family; let those rules be according to the word of God; let them be distinctly understood by all who come under his care, and let them be administered with a steady and an impartial hand; and he will find comparatively little difficulty in preserving order in his family, and regularity in his business. As he is not obliged to extend in every respect, the same indulgence to an apprentice as to his own children, so neither is he at liberty to exercise over them a greater severity. The great end of all corrective discipline, is improvement; and he certainly understands his duty very imperfectly as a father, or a master, who will allow his children to do with impunity that for which he would chastise his servants. It is true, that this is the policy, however, adopted in many families; but if chastisement is inflicted for the punishment of wrong, and not merely for the relief of passion, it is manifestly an egregious error, and frequently the certain forerunner of prodigality, vice, and ruin.

To be reasonable, their employment should also allow of opportunity for intellectual and moral improvement. And this the more readily, as it needs not take from their hours of regular

An additional fact.Right to protection.

toil, and will afford an excellent and profitable relaxation, alike creditable and advantageous to both the parties.

Under this view of the subject, allow me to suggest the additional fact, that the reflections arising out of a state of destitution, or orphanage, on some forms of character, will at times almost disqualify them for business, and, therefore, masters should reflect, that when they look upon those under them as indolent and sullen, they may be laboring under some deep depression or melancholy arising out of their isolated condition in life. Peradventure the servant or apprentice is an orphan, without father, or mother, or home; he has no special friend on earth to whom he can disclose the anxieties that heave his throbbing bosom; it may be that his heart is bleeding over the decease of his parents, or he is recounting the sorrows of his childhood, which sent him so early in life a wanderer from home; and hence God has commanded that masters shall forbear threatening, knowing that they also have a Master in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." Eph. vi, 9.

2. *Their protection should be ample.* Every man is, in a certain sense, the keeper of all under his family government. And as such he is bound to watch over them for good, and to defend them

Masters are to protect those under their care.

against injury in principles, habits, and character. As a father has more authority and influence in the domestic government than the child, so the master is presumed to have more than the servant, and is, therefore, both by a natural and moral appointment of God, his "brother's keeper." As such, he is to protect their persons; their health and limbs are not to be needlessly exposed to gratify his caprice, or to promote his pecuniary interests. He is to protect their morals, and not to suffer sin upon them; "he is culpable if he permit any vices among his domestics, which he might restrain by due discipline and proper interference. This results from the general obligation to prevent misery when in our power; and the assurance that we have, that vice and misery, at the long run, go together. Care to maintain in his family a sense of virtue and religion, received a divine approbation in the person of Abraham," Gen. xviii, 19: "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." But is this done, when a master places his apprentices under the care or in the society of men, whose whole vocabulary is a collection of obscene and blasphemous expressions, and whose very breath is pollution. He might as safely

A just recompense should be given.

trust their lives with a royal tiger in the jungles of Bengal, as their morals with such a monster.

Once more, he should defend them against all vile and corrupting associations, and endeavor deeply to impress on their minds the fact, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." And especially let him preserve them from all those secret combinations which are bound together under the solemnities of an oath.

3. *Their recompense should be just.* Every person who labors for stipulated wages, ought to receive those wages to the last mite. They are not only to be paid, but paid according to agreement; the poor are not to be oppressed in their wages. And in order to this, says Paley, clerks and apprentices ought to be employed entirely in the profession or trade they are intended to learn. Instruction is their hire, and to deprive them of the opportunities of instruction, by taking up their time with occupations foreign to their business, is to defraud them of their wages.

The laborer is to have a fair and just reward for his services. Advantage is not to be taken of his indigence, want of discrimination, or any other unfavorable circumstance, to extort from him labor below its current value. And hence those little artifices adopted to decoy the poor

Oppressive systems.

St. James.

into agreements to labor for less than they can obtain elsewhere, or for less than an equivalent, are so many infractions of the moral law of God. Masters are, in this, to do unto others as they would that they should do unto them; they are to give unto their servants that which is just and equal, bearing in mind that they also have a Master in heaven. Col. iv, 1.

The wages of the laborer are to be paid according to contract, or according to justice. The employer is not to pay his laborers in orders and drafts upon others, where his money will be fifteen or twenty per cent. below its value, nor is he to extort from them enormous prices for the necessities of life, as if he would thereby swallow up their little earnings. Owing to this wicked policy, which prevails to a fearful extent, in some sections of our own country, many, who are nominally free, are actually slaves. To the authors and abettors of this nefarious system of oppression, we may apply the burning language of St. James: "Go to, now, ye rich men; weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the

Oppressive systems.Job.

last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Chap. v, 1—4.

These are some of the duties of masters and employers towards such as are under their control; and they are to remember and lay to heart, that the relation of master and servant is a mere circumstance of the present life; that no man is the better, in the sight of God, for being a master, nor is any one the worse for sustaining the subordinate relation of a servant. Moral character is every thing with God: and this does by no means depend on these merely outward circumstances of this world, but on the right exercise of our affections towards the Lord, and the faithful discharge of our personal and relative duties.

This principle is well established in the moral administration of God, and hence has been most sacredly regarded by the truly pious of all ages. Take the testimony of pious Job on this interesting question: "If I did despise the cause of my man servant, or my maid servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and, when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in

Religion does not change our civil relations.

the womb? If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let my arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure. Chap. xxi, 13—15. 21—23.

We conclude with a few words of recapitulation. Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, affecting equality in the domestic circle, or civil regulations of society, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit. "The civil state in which a man was before his conversion, is not altered by that conversion, nor does the grace of God absolve him from any claims, which either the state or his neighbor may have upon him."

You, my brethren, as subordinate members of the domestic circle, have your peculiar trials, temptations, and discouragements, but then you are assured that as your day is, your grace shall be; and, also, that the way to preferment is open to all, and that if you are faithful in the posts

Conclusion.

you now occupy, it will lead on to places of greater advantage and comfort. Look over the history of your country; behold how many have risen from the humblest condition in life to places of the greatest trust, influence, and responsibility, by patient continuance in well doing. Never allow yourself to be dispirited, or to suspend exertion, but patiently follow on through the opening providences of God, governing your life, by the simple rule of seeking first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. If you are poor, remember that the Son of God has sanctified the state of poverty; heaven has put very special honor on the poor man's lot; the only begotten of the Father was born in a manger; he lived without house or home, died upon the cross, and was buried in the tomb of a stranger. Consider the present world as a fleeting, fading scene. In all things make the will of God the rule, and his glory the end of your being. Thus you will escape the corruptions that are in the world, and being made a partaker of the Divine Nature, you will at last be saved, with the power of an endless life.

If any, in the capacity of masters, will assume the responsibility of acting in open violation of the moral precepts of Christ, let them look to it,

Conclusion.

for there is a God in heaven who judges righteously; and he has adopted as his own cause, and taken upon himself to maintain the rights, and to avenge the wrongs of the poor. He is a God of truth, without partiality, just and right is he.

DISCOURSE VI.

GOD'S METHOD OF WEIGHING THE ACTIONS OF MEN.

Sam. ii, 3. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him are actions weighed."

To trace the relation of these words to the context, and to explain the history in which we find them, would require a course of reflections not precisely suited to the pulpit, and would, perhaps, be a misappropriation of our time. To develop the strong moral principles they embrace, and to bring them home to our hearts and consciences, may be equally as interesting, and decidedly a more profitable employment.

The character of Almighty God, as intimated in the text, is in perfect contrast with what we know of human nature, from every day's observation. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed;" but man is an imperfect and a short-sighted creature, whose recollections of the past are defective and confused, whose knowledge of the future is mere matter of conjecture or favor from God, and whose

Introduction.

understanding of the numerous subjects around him, is limited to their names, and some few of the purposes, to which they may be applied.

On almost every topic that enlivens the conversation of the fireside, that occupies the attention of the public through the medium of the press, or that calls forth the energies and resources of the pulpit, it is a conceded point, that we know but in part. True as this is of every other question, it is still more strikingly true of many of the more interesting and important events in the moral history of each individual man; and yet notwithstanding, it is deserving of remark, that on these very subjects, our precipitancy in judgment is so perfectly conformed to the limited nature of our information, that the one might, in most instances, be regarded as the rule of the other, or these two might be supposed to sustain the relation of cause and effect.

Behold, then, in the character of Jehovah, a standing reproof of the arrogance and the ignorant presumption of man; for although a God of knowledge, He weighs the actions of men. From Him let us learn to judge, not from appearances, but to judge righteous judgment.

Instead of pursuing these reflections further, we shall

His knowledge defined.

I. Make some remarks on the knowledge of God.

II. Show that, in the light of this knowledge, he will weigh the actions of man.

I. Make some remarks on *the knowledge of God*.

When we speak of knowledge as an attribute of *human* character, we refer to that state of mental enlargement and improvement, of which the human mind is capable, or to which it has been elevated, through the power of education. But knowledge in man, is always of necessity comparatively limited; the weakness of his faculties, the brevity of his life, and the numerous cares and afflictions attendant on his present state of being, all present barriers of fearful magnitude to the enlargement of his intellectual research, and to the accumulation of those facts and deductions, the possession of which constitutes a man of knowledge.

But when we raise our minds to the great Father of Spirits, the Lord of life and of glory, we contemplate an elevation where none of these difficulties attend the operation of mind, and where they cannot in any way impair the conception, or mislead the judgment of the un-

God's knowledge essential.

derstanding, for the simple reason that he is a God of knowledge.

The knowledge of God is that distinct and complete perception, which he has of all beings and things that do or that can exist. It comprehends their essence, attributes, relations, and tendencies, and all that is mysterious in their origin, wonderful in the progressive development of their nature, or eventful in its consummation or overthrow. It marks the rise and influence of every cause and agency in the material, intellectual, and moral departments of his works, and traces the nature, number, and magnitude of their effects; in a word, the universal range of matter and mind, whatever may be the mode of its existence, or the place of its location.

This knowledge belongs *essentially* to God. He is a God of knowledge as he is a God of truth, of holiness, and of power; it is not more essential to Him to be uncaused in his being, than it is that he be independent in his knowledge. All other knowledge is derived, whether it be that of angels or of men. If not received by direct revelation from God, it is obtained by the careful exercise and cultivation of their intellectual powers. It is, therefore, progressive in its nature, and is gradually rising into clearer views of the various topics on which it is exer-

And also absolute.

cised. But the knowledge of God is underived; it is independent; as there was none before Him, so there is none equal to Him. Of all created beings, it may be said there was a time when they had but one idea, then two, &c. But the Lord is a God of knowledge; what he now understands, he always understood, nothing is new to Him, nor can any thing be old as the subject of His knowledge. The ideas He now has, He always had, and will have forever. He is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose understanding is infinite, whose knowledge is unsearchable, and whose judgments are past finding out. Hence saith the prophet, "who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?"

But the knowledge of God is *absolute*. It not only extends to all things that can be known, but it fully comprehends all to which it extends. The past, the present, and the future, are all equally present with Him. There is no height nor depth, no oblivious shades of the past, nor unexplored regions in the immensity of the future, on which His omniscient eye, does not rest with fixed and searching gaze. As He fills

Nothing mysterious to God.

all space with His presence, so He comprehends all duration by His knowledge. As He is every where to uphold all things by the word of His power, so does He pervade all duration, inhabiting eternity, to know the end from the beginning.

“Oh wondrous knowledge, deep and high!
Where can a creature hide?”

To us, some things are secret, but to God there are no secrets. That which is done in the dark, is as if it had transpired in the light, and that which was spoken in the ear in the closet, as if it had been proclaimed upon the house-top. To us, some things are imperfectly known, because they are remote in their location, but God is every where; and the adoring seraph that burns at the foot of the throne, is not more perfectly understood, in all the elements of his intellectual and moral worth, than those kindred spirits who explore the remotest regions in the immensity of space. To us, some things are mysterious, but to God there are no mysteries; none in nature, none in providence, none in grace.

To Him the whole economy of nature is perfectly simple in its construction, and regular and harmonious in its operations. To Him there are no intricacies or perplexities in Providence; He

God's knowledge a rule of judgment.

brings light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and even causes the wrath of man to praise Him. So, also, in redemption, which stretches out before us as an illuminated and fathomless ocean of light, of truth and loveliness. To us, it is illimitable, but God meteth it out with a span. To us it is unfathomable, but God holdeth the waters of life in the hollow of his hand. Its profoundest depths, its comprehensive range, its mysterious and hallowing power on the human mind; every thing, from the immaculate conception of the Lord Jesus, to the regeneration of the human soul, is perfectly understood by Him, for He is a God of knowledge.

When we contemplate this truth, either abstractly, or as it is exemplified in the works of creation and providence, it is one of great and overwhelming power and sublimity. But viewed in its obvious relation to the moral principles and habits of men, as the light in which they appear to the Almighty, and as the rule according to which he will try our actions, it is one of fearful and startling import. But this is the view given of the subject in the text, and to this aspect of the question we turn in order

II. To show that in the light of this knowledge he will weigh the actions of men.

What is implied in weighing actions.

The text manifestly intimates that the knowledge of God is the light in which things appear to him, and according to which he approves or disapproves of them. As this knowledge is infinite, he can have no false perception of any thing, nor can he place an improper estimate on any of the actions of men. With men, frequently, that which is of little worth is highly esteemed, while things of infinite importance are set at nought; but with God actions are weighed.

Weighing is a process by which the intrinsic or relative value of articles is ascertained or determined, and always supposes a standard of value, a conformity or non-conformity to which determines the value of the article weighed. Hence the term is figuratively introduced in the text, as intimating the exact manner in which God will examine and judge of the actions of men. Every thing has its appropriate measure or law; the proper measure of the actions of intelligent beings is law, and of moral actions, is moral law: and by this standard the God of knowledge will weigh the actions of men. An action may be conceived of apart from its motive and its consequences, simply in its relation to that moral rule, which is the law of human beings. And hence may be good or bad in itself, as it answers the demands of that law or other-

The actions of men weighed with their motives.

wise. No action can be intrinsically good, whatever the motive of the actor or its effects may be, if contrary to the law of God; for the simple reason, that not human opinion or intention, but the will of God, is the standard of right and wrong. And, therefore, actions are to be weighed in themselves, because the process of weighing is for the purpose of revealing and making manifest their moral qualities. But as we seldom consider human conduct in this abstract light, apart from motive and consequence, to name this principle may be sufficient. We therefore proceed to remark, that actions are to be weighed in connection with their motives, their circumstances, the intention of the agent, and their results.

First. Acting will be weighed *in connection with their motives*. The motive is that particular consideration which, being presented to the mind, determines it to act. It is, therefore, a circumstance which gives primary character to action, and fixes its reputation with God, before it is matter of cognisance with man. An act may be good in itself, when viewed apart from its motive, whereas, if properly considered, it has all the elements of a heinous wickedness, and is justly deserving of the deepest hell.

It is good to feed the hungry, to clothe the

The actions of men weighed with their motives.

naked, to perform the various duties of religion; but if the motive from which these actions flow be unsound, it changes their entire character as matter of acceptable service to God. The impurity of the fountain poisons the stream, and that which it was hoped would be ground of commendation and reward, becomes the cause of a harsher censure and a deeper condemnation.

As this is an age of much apparent liberality of feeling and action, an age in which all the passions and predilections of the human mind are marshalled and brought into the field, for the accomplishment of great and benevolent objects, it may not be amiss, in order to avoid a future disappointment in our reward, to bear in mind that actions are weighed in connection with their *motives*.

The motive determines both the nature and time of the reward. Men who perform their works for God, who have a regard for the recompense of well-doing, will receive that recompense hereafter. But they who do their works to be seen of men, to please themselves, to gratify their pride, their prejudice, or their party, "verily I say unto you, that they have their reward," so far as it may be regarded as matter of benevolence or public good. But so far as it was an

A classification of character.

act of hypocrisy and self-seeking, their retribution is yet with the Almighty.

There is a class of men whose liberality is only the dictate of sheer good nature. What they do, is done under the power of constitutional impulse, without any special regard to moral principle or obligation to God. They give as readily to build a synagogue for Satan, as a temple for Jehovah, and are as ready to hold stock in the theatre, as a seat in the Church of Christ.

Another class there is who mostly give, but always do it grudgingly. They desire the reputation, but they abhor the expense of being liberal, and always, when called upon to aid in any benevolent enterprise, experience a most painful struggle between inclination and character. They desire to be reputed generous and liberal, but the cost is a burden too intolerable to be borne, and is not borne if they can manage to save their reputation and escape.

We see another class, whose contributions are always regulated by a steady regard to *praise*. They never give, unless it be under such circumstances as will exhibit them to advantage before the world! A poor man who needs a morsel of bread, or a garment to protect him against the

Actions weighed with their circumstances.

piercing cold, is hastily shaken off as a rude and insolent leech, from their benevolence, while the agent of some public institution, whose reports will be duly made known to the world, receives, perhaps, in the same day or hour, a thousand-fold more than would have made the poor man's heart sing for joy, and filled his lean and gloomy home at least with transient comfort.

There is yet another class of character, who always give both with promptitude and cheerfulness, not because they are interested in the object, or pleased with the applicant, but because they regard it as a matter of duty to God. Believing it better to give, even to a hundred unworthy applicants, than to withhold from one truly deserving. They always give according to the ability with which God has blessed them. Here it certainly is by no means difficult to conjecture whose actions, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, will answer the demands of the law, and who will then be seen as having spent their strength for nought, and their labor in vain.

Secondly. Actions will be weighed in connection with their circumstances. These are

Circumstances of time and place. The time and place of an act is always a consideration of moment. The sons of Eli rendered themselves

Various circumstances.

specially offensive in the sight of God, by the perpetration of their wickedness at the door of the tabernacle, and in the time of the sacrifices. It evinced a state of the greatest abandonment to vice and recklessness, thus to rush into the presence of the Most High, and to change the temple of his holiness into a theatre of folly and crime.

If we may readily conceive it possible on the one hand, for a person to be placed in circumstances in which it would be almost impracticable to avoid sin, of which the history of Joseph furnishes an instance, so on the other we can specify situations in life, in which it would require a very great want of correct principle, to run into wickedness. The sons of Eli above alluded to, are a case in point.

Now, if it be an aggravation of treason and rebellion to attempt the life of a monarch on his throne and in the midst of his ministers, surely it is a circumstance highly aggravating, to sin against God in his holy temple, and in the time of his worship, to blaspheme his fearful name at the foot of his altar, and venture thus into the very light of heaven, with the dispositions and the intentions of fiends.

There are also circumstances of *grace and mercy*. That it does please Almighty God frequently to pour out his holy spirit in an unusual

Various circumstances.

manner, on the church, and on the world, is certain; and it is not less certain that these seasons afford special advantages to men for moral and spiritual improvement; and, of course, impose corresponding obligations.

Again, there are circumstances of wrath and judgment. When the Almighty rises up out of his holy place, and shakes terribly the earth, and the sinners in Zion are afraid, and fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrite; then saith the prophet, "When thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants will learn righteousness."

Now the Lord is a God of knowledge, his understanding is infinite, and by him actions are weighed; weighed in connection with their circumstances. There is the worldling, who interrupts a serious discourse of our Lord Jesus, with this request, "Lord, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." He ought to have said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" "How shall I escape the wrath to come?" But with the Son of God before him for his instructor, his mind was engrossed with the things of this life; he was willing that Christ should adjust his temporal difficulties, but cared not that he should enlighten his soul—as many now value their ministers the more, as they are clever,

Illustration of principle.

jovial, business men, than as they are men of piety and fidelity in their office.

Behold Judas, who, while his Lord was discoursing on the subject of his approaching passion, praying with and for his disciples with holiest fervor and sympathy—there he sat, settling in his mind the price of his Master, and resolving to sell him for thirty pieces of silver. Like some in our own times, who, while they sit under the word of life, meditate the ruin of those that preach it to them. Reader, art thou the man?

There was Ananias, who, in a time of great religious excitement in the church, resolved to be liberal, but afterwards, yielding to his natural love of the world, he refused to redeem his promise, lied to conceal his dishonesty, was smitten of God, and died.

In all these cases it will be seen, that the circumstances give character to the action, and in judging of the one, the other must be taken into the account.

Thirdly. Actions will be weighed in connection with their design or the intention of the agent.

Men not unfrequently intend more evil than they are actually able to accomplish; they also

Actions weighed with the intention.

fall short of the good they previously designed. In both instances they are judged of according to the actual results, but God fixes the reputation of the deed by reference to the intention, and therefore the widow's mite was more acceptable to him, than the abundance of the more ostentatious contributors; for if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man hath.

The Lord said to David, "thou didst well, that it was in thy heart to build me a house," although the work was reserved for another person. Thus it was well for Whitfield to intend to project the plan of his orphan-house in Georgia: It was well for Dr. Coke to intend his East India missions, for although these holy men were not permitted to realise all their fond expectations, their views were obviously in accordance with the counsels of the Most High; and in the providence of God, they pointed to fields of labor that others were to occupy: and certainly in that day when actions are weighed, the benevolence of the intention will add mightily to the reputation of their deeds.

And then the unlawful cravings of avarice will also be scrutinised as theft and robbery; the dark, cruel musings of malice will be punished as murder; and the evil glances of licentious

Actions weighed with their results.

love will be turned into hell as adultery. For he that said, thou shalt not steal, also said, thou shalt not covet; and the authority that said, thou shalt not kill, has also declared, that he that hateth his brother is a murderer. See Matt. v, 26, 27.

Fourthly. Actions are to be weighed in connection with their results.

Men most generally, when they perform an act, especially if it be of doubtful tendency, fix to themselves certain limits, within which its consequences are to be confined. But all such restrictive regulations, imposed upon our own deeds, are perfectly the work of the imagination. While the thought is yet in the heart, and the word remains in the tongue, they may be easily suppressed, and although in themselves displeasing to God, exert no deleterious influence over the affairs of others. But when that thought becomes embodied in words, or that desire of the heart starts into the existence of a palpable deed, it is then immortal, it becomes an active principle in society, a circulating medium of good or evil, and aids or injures multitudes of whom its author will never hear, until actions are weighed in connection with their results. To place this in a clearer light, accompany me in the following remarks:

Various characters.Child of avarice.

That *miserable child of avarice and perdition*, the devotee of cards and dice, whose only prayer and purpose under heaven is to dupe and defraud his fellow men, does not, perhaps, design all the withering consequences that attend his heartless trade. He did not design to drive a father to distraction, to break the heart of a tender female, a wife, a mother; to reduce a family of innocent and helpless children to beggary and ruin. No, he did not intend, nor did he care to prevent it. Urged on by the cruel lust of gain, he resolves to make every thing bend to his own purposes; he closed his own eyes upon consequences, and left others to grapple with them as they might be able. But is he, therefore, excusable, either before the world, or the Judge of all the earth? Certainly not. The incendiary who casts a fire-brand, not caring where it falls, to the destruction of your property, and asks, am I not in sport? or the assassin, who discharges his fire-arms into the busy throng of industrious men, to the loss of limb or life, is not more truly guilty than he.

The *libertine*, who by many a base and unmanly art, by perjuring his conscience, and selling his soul, and who had at last succeeded in destroying the object of his criminal affection, did not intend all the gloomy results that ensued;

The slanderer.

the ruined mother, the murdered child, the deathless infamy on earth, the ceaseless torture in hell—no, he did not intend them, nor did he care to prevent them. He would not, and therefore, perhaps he did not see all the consequences. But is his perverseness to be his apology, and because he ruined your child with his eyes shut, closed for the purpose, is he, therefore, not a murderer?

The *slanderer*, who secretly set an evil suspicion in motion, smiled as it formed into rumor, and exulted as it gained credence in the neighborhood or the church, fancied to himself, at first, certain limits within which its effects would be confined. But an ordinary degree of attention would have seen these limits yielding as the air, and boundless as the horizon of humane existence. And was he not capable of that reflection; and was he not under obligation to exercise it, in all cases, and more especially in those which concern the welfare and happiness of others? Most unquestionably he was; and is, therefore, justly chargeable with the first, and also the final result—the consequences which he might so easily have foreseen and prevented, and which in refusing to prevent he has constituted his own.

The *unfeeling child of plenty*, who turned from his door the hand of supplicating indigence,

The unfeeling.Ministers.

to shiver and perish in the winter cold, did not intend to be guilty of a brother's blood, but such was the effect—the natural, legitimate, and speedy effect. And who will answer for it at the bar of God, when actions are weighed? Not merely the morsel of bread refused, but also the consequences of the refusal will be weighed by Him who even now asks, “Cain, where is thy brother?” In vain you reply, “Am I my brother's keeper?” The voice of his blood crieth unto God from the ground.

The *minister of the sanctuary*, who, to serve himself, his friend, or his party, suppressed truth, or made the pulpit the instrument of his prejudice, his passions, or his pride, may read his doom in Ezek. xxxiii. Miserable man, who, occupying a position sufficiently elevated to see and show the way to life eternal, becomes a stumbling block to deathless souls, who either through his levity or his pride, his time-serving carelessness or crimes, are involved in shame and everlasting contempt.

But time would fail to follow out this branch of our subject into all its natural and important bearings. Our actions will be weighed in connection with their results—immediate, more remote and final results; nor is this unreasonable.

Writers.

Publishers.

The individual who fires a city, may be regarded as continuing his agency, while the devastating flame is unsubdued. And he who poisons a fountain, is guilty of destroying the thirsty pilgrim who drinks of its stream. And so he who exhibits impure prints or books in his windows or elsewhere, or vends them from his counter, or issues them from his press, or creates them with his pen, or in any way brings them before the world, is, and ought to be held accountable for their effects.

Not unfrequently he sets a wave of thought and feeling in motion, which rolls on, swelling and spreading in its course through a long succession of ages, casting up mire and dirt, the elements of moral contamination, disease, and death, to countless millions. Here are effects wider than the population of any one country or generation, and deathless as the mind. And is it not true, awfully true, of the prime mover of these effects, even while in his grave, that, "he being dead, yet speaketh."

Thus we see in what sense God will weigh the actions of men, in an even balance, held by an impartial hand, and seen in the light of an infinite understanding. The simple deed, its circumstances, the intention of the agent, and its

Inferences.Intellectual improvement.

consequences—all these shall come into notice as matter of pleasing review or of painful and tremendous condemnation. We shall,

III. Make some improvement.

First. Let us learn to cultivate our rational powers. The Lord is a God of knowledge; Heaven is a place of superior knowledge, where we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. The angels of light, those living creatures round about the throne, are pre-eminent in knowledge. And are we then to worship in that temple of light? Are we to be the companions of those celestial spirits, and to participate in the nature and felicity of Jehovah, the God of knowledge? Then let us cultivate our rational powers: let us endeavor to increase our stock of knowledge by reading, observation, reflection, and prayer.

There are many topics within the range of human inquiry, calculated to afford matter of pleasing contemplation to the mind of man, and to assist in weaning him from the low pursuits of this world, and in fitting him for a more elevated and felicitous state of being; but which, not being essential either to his present safety or future well-being, are not placed fully within the reach of the great mass of mind. Thus the

Revelation superior to nature.

splendor of the heavenly orbs, and the still more magnificent heavens in which they proclaim the glory of God, and show forth his handy work, are spread out before the universe of intelligent beings, a wonderful exhibition of the wisdom and power of the Almighty, which all may see and admire, but few can understand. It requires time, learning, and labor, and a superior reach of thought, to enter that vast theatre of action, and survey the order and majesty of the arrangements, the harmony and sublimity of the operations. But if this is a pleasure reserved for the few, it is one, the loss of which is not felt by the many, and the less so, because the Spirit of God has dictated a book, infinitely more sublime in its revelations and important in its bearing, than the volume of nature. It is a farther revelation of his will, enlarged and improved, in which life and immortality are brought to light. Here we may learn the nature and the will of God, the character and employments of celestial spirits, the destiny of the just made perfect, the rewards of virtue, and the inevitable doom of wicked men. Here we may learn the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and have our minds enlightened, enlarged, and sanctified, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, whom to know aright is life eternal. Such know-

Moderation in judging others.

ledge, it is the will of God, we should cultivate; he has given us the capacity requisite to its attainment, blessed us with ample means for its prosecution, and so identified it with our happiness, as to make it at once both our duty and interest.

Secondly. Let us learn to judge cautiously, righteously, and not from appearances only. If we would pronounce a fair and impartial judgment on others, we must first ascertain their circumstances, motives, and intentions; we must weigh their actions. And if we are incompetent to this, we are not less so to pronounce judgment upon them.

If we suppose the adoption of this rule, so obviously scriptural, there would be at once an end of all unrighteous and of all uncharitable judging. Men would learn to speak cautiously of each other; would suspend their judgment frequently on ordinary transactions, and much more in relation to those principles and habits which involve a man's reputation in this life, and his destiny in that to come. The Almighty has reserved to himself alone the tremendous right of pronouncing on the moral condition and final destiny of men. We may with perfect safety infer the general character of the tree from its foliage and fruit; but to say when

Perfection of the Divine Providence.

and how it shall be cut down, belongs exclusively to the great proprietor of the vineyard.

Let us, therefore, learn to be slow in judgment and impartial in judging. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Let us not venture to anticipate the decision of that day, which shall try every man's work as by fire. Let us bear in mind, that we have all yet to be weighed in the balance of the divine law; and we are advertised beforehand, "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Thirdly. Let us admire the perfection of the Divine Providence. "He is a God of knowledge," "He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." From his high and holy habitation where he dwells in glory ineffable, He *looks abroad* in the vast regions of space, crowded with systems, created, upheld, and directed by the word of His power. Thus we are taught, in the word of God, to contemplate the Almighty Creator and Preserver of All, as presiding over, and guiding the affairs of this great universe, however complicated in their arrangement, vast in the field of their operation, or protracted in the period of their existence.

He beholds as the creature of His special care,

Perfection of the Divine Providence.

each of the various systems that people the regions of space, and all worlds in each, in all their leading and subordinate arrangements, their various circumstances, their heaving oceans, and murmuring rills, the different tribes of rational and irrational beings that inhabit them, that crowd their cities, that roam in their deserts, or warble in their groves; with all their cares, their wants and sufferings, their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows. He has not left our world to plunge its way through the fields of ether, like a vessel in a stormy sea, without rudder, chart, or guide, a sport of warring winds, and opposing tides, much less has He left its intelligent population as helpless orphans, unpitied, and unprovided for, amidst the abounding ills, and ceaseless vicissitudes of life. As a God of knowledge, he enters into the very minutiae of our circumstances, bottles up our tears, and numbers the hairs of our head. He watches over our race with more than paternal tenderness. How vastly more cheering, reasonable, and sublime, are these views of the Divine character and government, than any we can derive from the shrivelled, cold, and heartless systems of modern infidelity. Who can hesitate to determine which is the more excellent? Christian! this God is our

God's knowledge just reason of fear to the wicked.

God forever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death.

We have yet one reflection more;—it is a reflection of deep and solemn import to the wicked. The Lord is a God of knowledge, and there is no might nor counsel against Him; there is no darkness in which the workers of iniquity can hide themselves. If they should dig into hell, thence would He bring them forth. There is no remote point in the regions of space, to which the offender may retire, a voluntary exile from the displeasure of his God. God is every where, there is no power nor strength in numbers, though even kings should set themselves—there is no wisdom nor cunning in the policy of men, though even rulers take counsel together. What Jehovah has appointed, that shall come to pass. He has appointed the day of trial, He has fixed the standard of value, and placed it before the world; and we all hasten to the period and the place when and where actions are weighed—where actions are weighed in an even balance, held by an impartial hand, and in the sight and with the approval of the assembled universe.

Then many things highly esteemed by men on earth, will be regarded as a vile and loathsome abomination. There, not only the outward act,

The final day.

but the secret principle of action will be brought into view. Startling beyond all the anticipations of hope, or the forebodings of despair, will be the developments and disclosures attendant on that day of trial. There the child of earthly suffering and privation, whose spirit was sanctified by the blood of the cross, will shine forth to the honor of divine grace, as a star in the kingdom of his Father. And there many who shone as stars amidst the constellations of this world, will disappear in the darkness of everlasting night. Men will be astonished to see how many of the great and prominent actors on the theatre of this life, the reputed wise and mighty, chief captains and men of renown, will be met without ceremony, and judged without favor; how they will be weighed in the same balance with the ignoble throng; will be weighed by themselves, without their reputation, equipage, and earthly glory; the poor man without his poverty, and the rich man without his gold, will be weighed together with their actions. Those things will then be no farther remembered than as they presented aids or difficulties in the performance of duty. Then it will not be so much what number of talents we had, as how we improved them; not whether we were esteemed by

Examination.

men, but whether we esteemed* and performed the will of God.

What, then, are our principles? Are we without charity, without pity, forbearance, or compassion—unforgiving and vindictive? Then, behold the law! behold the Eternal Judge! behold the throne! All proclaim, “with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” On the other hand, “blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

In view of these facts, let us watch and be sober; cultivate uprightness of intention and tenderness of spirit; let us seek, through the Lord Jesus Christ, such an assurance of the divine favor, as will enable us to contemplate that day of trial with composure, with confidence, with transport, saying with the apostle, “Even so, come Lord Jesus, and come quickly. Amen.”

THE END.

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